

Family Religion,

IN THREE

LETTERS

TO A

FRIEND.



By JOHN SHOWER.

L O N D O N,

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Of Family Religion.

THE FIRST LETTER.

S I R,

THE Substance of what I lately preach'd concerning *Family Religion and Worship*, I now send you, at your Desire, in *Three Letters*. The *First* recommends the Duty with the Grounds of it: The *Second* answers some Objections, and Difficulties as to the Practice: The *Third* directs the manner of Performance, &c. The Success of these plain Discourses, through the Blessing of Heaven, was beyond Expectation; to bring the daily Worship of God into several Houses, where before there was none; and to have it constant where it was perform'd but seldom, and uncertainly; and to be now every Day, instead of once a Week,

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and every Morning and Evening instead of Prayer at *Night* only.

Divers of our Brethren in this City can say the like, and I hope more, of the good Effects of our Agreement to preach on this Subject about the same time. It was seasonable to more than we imagined: And there may be divers who have since begun to worship God in their Families, who are ashamed to own that they neglected it so long. Tho not a few, with humble Thankfulness to God, have acknowledg'd their Conviction, and Reformation of that Neglect. Many Servants and Apprentices assure us, that God is now daily worship'd, and the Holy Scriptures read in the Families where they live, who had no such thing before, save only on the Lord's-Day.

I had no thoughts at first of publishing any thing on this Subject, because there is a great deal to this purpose already printed in * other Practical Books, from whence I have had Assistance;

* *Mr. Gurnal's Christian Warfare. Mr. Swinnock's Christian Man's Calling. Mr. Baxter's Directory. The Supplem. to the Morning-Exercise at Cripplegate. Some of Dr. Manton's Sermons. Mr. O.H's Family-Altar, &c.*

stance; and some others of my Brethren, I did hope would be prevailed with to print their Sermons, (and am glad to hear that it is now doing, or resolved to be done.) But you, and others who do constantly attend my Ministry, do hope to profit further by the Perusal of those things, which in the Delivery were of some use.

This is reason enough to me for appearing again so soon in Print. I may say in this case as one (whose Name I honour) doth upon somewhat a like Occasion, that as in all the Removes of my Life, I have been still led to that place, which was most remote from my own Thoughts, and never design'd or contriv'd by my self; So it hath been, as to what I have published; there hath been (for the most part) some unexpected Providence, and Occasion sufficient to satisfy me, that I ought to do it; while those Writings, which I most affected, have been stifled in the Conception; and those which I have most labour'd in, are like to be buried in the Dust: Hereby I am made to know that God is the Disposer of all.

In this first Letter I shall collect the Substance of what may *recommend* and

prove the Duty of *Family Religion* and *Worship*; at least what I think is sufficient to do so, tho it be not all that can be said. I begin with the Necessity of it, in order to a *National Reformation*.

There is not a more common Subject of Complaint, than the growing Corruption of Manners, and the Prevalency of Debauchery, and Irreligion among us. We must shut our Eyes, and stop our Ears, if we are not acquainted with it: Who is not sensible of the Justice and Truth of such a Complaint? All serious People profess to bewail the want of Reformation; and many are apprehensive of impending Judgments upon that Account. But what Hope of a *National Reformation*, if it begin not in *Families*? If they, who have the Care and Government of these lesser Societies, will not faithfully do their part; neither Magistrates, or Ministers can expect Success in doing Theirs. Nations will be wicked, and Churches will be corrupt, and Cities will abound with all manner of Impurity; if particular Families, out of which the Members are all composed, be disordered and irregular.

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They who are not taught the Knowledge and Fear of God betimes, no wonder if they run into Atheism and Debauchery as they grow up. That so many are thus corrupted in Principles, and Conversation, must needs be very much owing to the Neglect and Mis-carriage of Parents, and Heads of Families. Reformation must therefore begin in Families: And a whole Street would soon be made clean, by every Man's Care as to his own House, and sweeping before his own Door. The Psalmist began that in his own Family, which he design'd should reach to his whole Kingdom: *Psal.* 101.

Is it strange, if they who have lived many Years in such Families, where God was not worshipped, where there was little or no Concern about Religion, (it may be not so much as the Form, and the Shew of it) if they are ignorant and careless, dissolute and profane, when they come to have Families of their own? If they be as little solicitous for the Souls under their Care, as their own Parents and Masters were of *theirs*, during their Minority? If there be no reading the Holy Scriptures, no instructing of Children and

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Servants,

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Servants, no Prayer and Praise offered to God in the Family, *as such* ; how unlikely is it, that such who are brought up in their Youth in such Houses, should afterwards be Exemplary for Religion in their own ?

It lies more upon Parents and Masters, to recover, and preserve serious Godliness in the World, than either upon the Civil Magistrate, or the most diligent and faithful Ministers of Christ, in their places. And whence can we hope for any *useful Magistrates*, or *faithful Ministers*, if they are not formed to be capable of being *such*, by the wise and good Instruction of holy Parents, and the Blessing of God thereupon, in their tender Years ? It is certain, they are like to profit little by the preaching of the Word, if they have not Understanding and prepared Minds, by the Instructions of Parents and Masters at home ; at least little in comparison of others who have had that Advantage. One great reason why People do not better understand Sermons, and profit more by them, is, because they never well understood their Catechism.

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It is in vain therefore to talk against the Badness of the Times, and the Looseness of the Age, unless you will resolve that Reformation shall begin at home; and every one be at the pains to Reform his own little Family.

It is from thence that Wickedness doth spread and diffuse it self over a whole Kingdom. One ignorant, atheistical, erroneous, or wicked Family may do much to corrupt, defile and destroy several others, when the Branches thereof are separated: As by a Son going into one Family, and a Daughter into another, and a Servant into a third: They carry and communicate their evil Principles and Customs, and Prejudices, to the Infection of others. It cannot reasonably be expected that Persons, when they come abroad in the World, should ordinarily prove better than their Education. Whereas, as one observes, a Religious Family is, on the contrary, a diffusive Blessing, like a Stock of Bees, which sends forth Swarms and Honey into Neighbouring Parts. Especially as the Members hereof come hereafter to have Families of their own. Therefore to shut Religion out of Families, or not promote

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it there, is the means to thrust it out of the World.

This has been observed by the very Pagans, as the proper way for a private Man to be a *Publick Good*, and serviceable to the Welfare of his Country, *viz.* by *ordering things well at home*, with Wisdom and Care, in his own House and Family. And there is hardly any thing whereby so much Evil is done to the *Publick*, as by the Carelessness of Parents in the Instruction of their Children, and the Negligence, or ill Examples of Masters with respect to their Servants. Among some of the *Heathens*, a Penalty has been laid upon the Parents, when the Children were ill-conditioned: and they might be sued in the Courts of Judicature, if they neglected the Education of their Children.

And how much the Safety, Pleasure and Comfort of our Lives depends upon the faithful Discharge of Relative Duties, Experience will teach us. What greater Comfort can a Parent or a Master have, than to see the Success of his Endeavours for the Good of those under his Roof? A natural Parent may say it, as well as a spiritual one, *I have no greater Joy than to see my Children walking*

walking in the Truth. It is said of *Abraham*, *Heb. 11. 9.* that he dwelt in Tents with *Isaac* and *Jacob*; *Heirs with him of the same Promise.* How comfortable is it when Father, Son and Grandson, are all Heirs of the same promised Salvation? Especially if God bless your Endeavours towards it, that they who come from your Loins may serve the Lord. There is a double Blessing where the Father is Godly, and the Son so likewise. To see them alive to God, who were dead in Sin, will revive the Heart of a Religious Parent, as it did old *Jacob's*, to know that his Son *Joseph* was alive. To have Wife and Children bear the Image of God, and our Servants to obey, and serve, and please their Heavenly Master; and by our Faithfulness, and Care, and Diligence to be brought to know, and love, and worship, and honour him, and be accepted with him; What an unspeakable Delight must this be! when the Savour of Religion descends from the Head to all the Members of the Family, as the precious Ointment, poured on the Head of *Aaron*, ran down to the Skirts of his Garments. You then may, and will love them with a higher kind

kind of Love, than bare natural Affection.

In short, you will *love* your Husbands, Wives, and Children, and holy Relations, with *another sort of Love* than other Persons do theirs. It is a more fervent, more pure, more faithful, more comfortable Love, which is superadded by Religion, and results from their Love to God, and Participation of his Image. You love them, as the Friends and Brethren of Christ, as Heirs of the same Inheritance, as begotten again to a Divine Life by the same Spirit, as born of the same Immortal Seed of the Word, as nourish'd by the same Spiritual Food, as under the same Bond of the Covenant, as of one Household of Faith, as Souldiers under the same Colours and Banner of Christ, as called to the same blessed Hope of the Gospel, as Travellers to the same Heavenly Country, and Coheirs of the same glorious, everlasting Kingdom. You cannot love your unsanctified Relations in this manner, whatever Natural or Civil Bonds of Union there may be between you and them. It will please you doubtless, to see them thrive and prosper in the World, whom you tenderly

tenderly love; but it must much more do so, to see them faithful to God, live to his Glory, and ripen for Heaven. Whether you live or die, you may then comfortably resign them, and trust them with God, who loves them better than you, and will be sure to take care of them. With what Pleasure can you think of the Sin and Misery which they escape? What Wickedness such a Child would else have committed on Earth? and what Torments he must have endured in Hell, if he had been wicked? Their Love, Honour and Obedience to you, (which the Grace of God will teach them) will also add to your Joy; in your Health and Sickness, or old Age, they will pray for you. And if they die, you can look forward to the everlasting Happiness of their Souls, as well as your own, and the hopes of meeting them with Comfort in the Day of Reckoning.

And what an Honour is it to any Family, to have serious Godliness transmitted from Father to Son, and from the Son to the Grand-Child? To be able to say, My God, and my Father's God, and my Grand-father's God?

2 Tim.

2 *Tim.* 1. 5. as *Pliny* reports, * it was counted a great Honour and Felicity, that in one Family of the *Fabii*, there were three Presidents of the Senate one after another; and in one House of *Curio's*, there were three Orators one after another.

Besides, how Beautiful and Pleasant a Thing is a Religious Well-ordered Family! How Comfortable is it to dwell in such an House? Where God is Worshiped, and his Laws observed, and his Day sanctified, his Word read, his Authority owned, and his Laws made the Rule! Where it is an Honour, and not a Reproach to eschew Evil and do Good! God promises to bless the Habitations of the Just, and how sweet will his Presence be unto such! Whereas, to live in a House where the Name of God is never used, but in jest, or scorn, or prophane Oaths; where the Inhabitants are as so many Brutes, that live from day to day, as if they had no Souls to save, no World but this to mind, and no Expectations beyond the Grave; where Worldliness and Sensuality, filthy Talk, and Intemperance,

&c.

* *Dr. Manton* on *Heb.* 11. p. 551.

etc. have infected Superiours and Inferiours. Who would dwell in such a House? There cannot generally be Peace and Union, Love and Concord in such Mens Dwellings. Family Jars, Contentions and Sorrows are occasioned by Sin, which Family Religion would do much to prevent and cure.

If Children are a Grief to their Parents, and Thorns in their Eyes, (as a Wicked Son is the Calamity and Shame of his Father, and Heaviness to his Mother;) they may thank themselves, as of their own Planting: if they did not with Love and Diligence, with Wisdom and Faithfulness seek their Salvation. If Servants neglect their Duty to you, how can you wonder, when you have neglected yours to them? You must bear the Fruit of their Sin, if you do not teach them the Principles of Religion, which should make them better; and teach them to keep a good Conscience by giving them your own Example. But if your Endeavours should not succeed for their Conversion, and Salvation, you will yet have much more Peace than otherwise; as having done what you could towards it. Whereas, without such Indeavours,
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it must be an afflictive piercing Thought when any of them *Die*, or when you your selves must ; to consider that you did no more to prevent their Damnation ; and that such and such, through your Unfaithfulness, are like to Perish for ever, who sprang from your Loins, or went to Hell out of your House.

Moreover, what Evidence can you have of your own Piety, and Sincerity towards God, if you do not thus endeavour the Spiritual and Eternal Good of those under your Charge? *Abraham* would command his Children, and his Household after him, that they should fear the Lord. *Joshua* resolves to engage all his House to serve the true God with him ; though a General and a Great Man, did not think it beneath him to own Religion before all the World, and endeavour to promote it. He would not serve the True God *alone*, if he could prevail with Others to join with him : Proposeth his own Example to the whole Nation ; and that as far as in him lay all his Family at least should be Religious. *Cornelius* was a devout Man, and feared God with all his House. We may, without being uncharitable, suspect the found-

soundness of their Religion; who are unconcerned for the spreading of it in their Families. How is it consistent with Faithfulness to your own Souls; to have little or no Care concerning theirs? If you are wanting in using the means for their Salvation, you shake the ground of Hope concerning your own.

And Family Prayer and Instruction, and the Holy Examples of Good Men in their Houses, is one of the *First Means* which God commonly makes use of to Convince, and Turn, and Sanctifie such as were Ignorant and Carnal. At least, Education making the first Impression on their Minds, whatever Change may be afterwards made by free Conversation, somewhat of the first good Tincture is like to abide.

Ordinarily I say, through the Blessing of God, this may be hoped for; tho it must be confessed, that where the Advantages of Education are mis-improved, it is observed, many of the *Children* and *Servants* who have been bred in good Families, prove worse than others. If they forsake God, he hath said, *He will forsake them, and cast them*

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them off for ever. It is a Judicial Act in God, when Children cast off the God of their Fathers. If they turn Apostates, they many times run deeper into Sin, and further from God than others, as *Cain, Eban, Ishmael, Esau, Eli's Sons, Absalom*, yea *Solomon, Rehoboam, Manasseh*, and few comparatively recovered. The Light and Means they sin against provokes God to abandon them. Upon the same grounds we may give an account, why there are more *Atheists* in such places, where the Christian Religion is professed, and the Power of it rejected, than among any other sort of Men, even than there were among the *Heathens* themselves. For * God hath designed to *Magnifie his Word above all his Name*, above all other ways of the Revelation of himself to the Children of Men. Therefore where this is despised and rejected, *Reason* or the Light of Nature shall not have the same Power and Efficacy, as on them who never enjoyed the Light of the Gospel, or so much of it. From the same Reason, that the Children of Professors

* See to this purpose, Dr. *Owen* of *Spiritual-Mindedness*. 4^o. Chap. 8.

Professors are sometimes irrecoverably Profligate, there is more *Common Honesty and Justice* to be found among civilized *Heathens* and *Mahometans*, than among false and degenerate Christians. Their Hearts are judicially hardened, and their Eyes blinded. And the Contempt of Gospel Light must needs beget, and leave on the Mind such a depraved corrupt Habit, as cannot but incline unto the worst of Evils. 2 Pet. 2. 21. And as all *Atheism* springs from a Resolution not to see things Eternal, and invisible to Sense; where-ever Men are resolved not to see, the greater the Light is which shines about them, the faster they must close their Eyes. It is not therefore to the *Disparagement*, but *Honour of the Gospel*, that so many now themselves to be *Atheists*, in those places where the Truth of it is known and professed: For none can have any inclination thereto, till they have rejected the Gospel, which immediately exposeth them to the worst of Evils. They take shelter from their Fears in downright *Atheism*, which alone pretends to give them security against the Light of Divine Revelation. And what means can be used for the recovery

very of such? The most rational Arguments to prove the Being and Existence of God, may be of good use to shame, and expose their foolish Pretences. But Men under the Power of Atheistical Thoughts, are insnared *into them* by a Love of some Lust, and a desire to live securely in Sin; and no Arguments from Reason, are like to prove an effectual Cure to the Predominant Love of Sin, and an Habitual Course in it, where Men have rejected the Means and Motives unto that end declared in Divine Revelation.

Parents however have sufficient encouragement to hope for success in their faithful Endeavours: There be many can speak of God, and praise him as their *Fathers God*, from Age to Age. If they neglect their Duty to Children, (which is ordinarily the reason, why so many miscarry) they cannot challenge God, for not performing his Covenant-Promise, but must condemn themselves. But whatever the Success be, every Parent, and Head of Family is obliged to Honour God, and Promote Religion, and do what good he can for the Souls of others, within his Sphere.

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This all in their several Places are bound to endeavour, as they have opportunity. You must be faithful to Christ and his Interest in every *Relation*, and in every *Capacity*. If you are obliged to serve and worship God in a single Capacity, as Private Persons; by virtue of the same Dedication of your selves to Him, you are bound to serve and Honour him in *every Relation*, as Husbands, Parents, Masters, and Heads of Families, in every State and Condition, according to your Capacity. And by Family Prayer and Worship God hath greater Honour, than by Secret Prayer; tho therein you may more particularly, and largely express the state of your own Soul.

And of how great Consequence, to the *Eternal Salvation*, or *Ruine of Souls*, is your Care, or Unfaithfulness herein! How can you serve the Devil more effectually, than by furthering the Damnation of all under your Roof, through the neglect of your Duty to them? And without giving them Assistance, and Help to a Holy Life, they will have continual Temptations to Sin. In that House wherein God is not served, honoured, and worshiped, the Devil's

Devil's Interest will prevail. And since they have an Everlasting Happiness to attain, and Endless Misery to escape, they will have little reason to thank you, for whatever else you can teach them, or do for them; if you will not instruct them, and assist them in *This*, their most Important Concern.

It might be hoped, that if *Parents* did their part in the use of God's first appointed Means, to sanctify their Children; he would usually bless their Endeavours in order to his saving Grace. And when serious Religion is once got into a Family, it has been observed, for your Encouragement, that ordinarily the Grace of God doth not soon leave it: tho there may be some sad Interruption, yet it appears many times again in Grand-Children, and Great Grand-Children; as in the Seed of good *Jehoshaphat* and others, *2 Chron.* 20. 21. 22. Chap. *Jotham* had *Ahaz*, but *Ahaz* had *Hezekiah*; and if not in the direct Line, yet collaterally. So that by this means you may transmit Religion to Posterity, from Generation to Generation; as Sin is propagated from Father to Son, and from one wicked Family diffused to many others: And you perpetuate your

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own Name and Honour too; for God-ly Children occasion their Parents to be called to Memory. By beholding Timothy's Piety, the Apostle is minded to remember his Mother, and Grandmother, Eunice and Lois, 2 Tim. i. 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned Faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy Grandmother Lois, and thy Mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. The Piety and Care of holy Women is recorded with Honour, Acts 16. 1. Behold a certain Disciple was there, named Timotheus, the Son of a certain Woman which was a Jewess, and believed; but his Father was a Greek.

Such is the singular Usefulness of the holy Government of Families to reform the World, and destroy the Kingdom and Interest of the Devil, that there is hardly any thing that Men have more Objections against, or more Evasions and Excuses to extenuate the Neglect of their Duty, or persuade themselves it is none, than in this Case. One of the most common and prevailing Cavils is this, That if they bring their Children and Servants to the Publick Worship, to be taught by the Minister, there is no positive, express Scripture for the Worship

ship of God in their Families, to call them together, to pray with them, and read the Scriptures, &c.

But in how many other cases is it granted, that the want of a positive express Command will not conclude such or such a Thing to be no Duty? The Baptism of Infants, the Sanctification of the first Day of the Week as the Christian Sabbath, the Admission of Women to the Lord's-Table, and other Instances may be given, which may be proved to be Matter of Duty, without positive express Command. The Apostle is said to confound the *Jews* dwelling at *Damascus*, proving out of the Scriptures, that *Jesus was the Christ*; *Acts* 9. 21. it must be by the Harmony of the Holy Scriptures, and by Deductions from express Texts: for he did not bring any one particular Scripture out of the Old Testament, to prove in so many Letters, that *Jesus was the Christ*. Nor did our Lord in his Proof of the Resurrection of the Dead against the *Pharisees*, out of the Old Testament, *Mat.* 22. 37. There are no such words as the *Resurrection of the Dead* mention'd in that Passage, from which he proves it. *I am the God of Abraham*, &c.

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It is an Argument of a very perverse Mind, to insist so much upon positive Scriptural Proof of that as our Duty, which must be acknowledged to be so much for our Benefit and Advantage, and for the Publick Good.

There is reason enough to believe, that they who pretend there is no express Scripture for this kind of Duty, would little mind it, if there were never so many, and never so express. For if Men were true to God, and their own Souls, in those things for which we have the most positive, and express, and repeated Authority of the Holy Scriptures; they would not raise such a Scruple. There is an express Command to Repent of Sin, and to Believe on Christ, and to make your Calling and Election sure; to Redeem your Time, and walk Circumspectly; to do good unto all; to pray every where, and all sorts of Prayer; and in every Calling, Station and Relation, therein to abide with God; to live by Faith upon the invisible World; to prepare to die, and to remember the Judgment-Seat of Christ, before which we must be made to stand, to answer for all we have received and done in the Body, &c.

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there are *Expreſs Scriptures* about theſe things: And did we believe them, remember them, and obey them, we ſhould ſoon ſee Reason, and Evidence ſufficient for all that Duty of worſhipping God, and promoting Religion in our Families, which I would now preſs.

I know there be ſome Arguments uſed from Scripture upon this Subject, which many think will not conclude all that which they are brought to prove. As that becauſe we read of the Church of God in ſuch a Man's Houſe, *Rom. 16. 5.* (when it is likely there were no common Aſſemblies of Chriſtians at Rome) that therefore every Houſe ſhould be as a Church, by daily Prayer and Praise to God: For the Houſe of God is an Houſe of Prayer, and a Church is God's Houſe. I will not urge this, becauſe a Houſe might be called a Church, only on the Account of the Church ſometimes aſſembling for Divine Worſhip in ſuch a Man's Houſe. I grant the ſmalleſt Congregation of the Faithful met to worſhip God, may bear the Name of a Church. However, I do not believe this Argument, becauſe I believe it true of many in this City and Nation, (and
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with I had no ground for it) than they have had frequent Meetings in their Houses for Prayer and Preaching, and divers Christians have resorted to the Worship of God there, and yet the Master of the Family lived in the neglect of Family Prayer, and the daily Worship of God in his House.

Neither will I urge the Example of our Saviour Christ, his praying with his Disciples: Though much may be gathered from his Pattern, as having a Family, whereof he was the Master, and his Twelve Apostles Members. (Constant Residence in one House is not necessary to constitute the Relation between the Head of a Family, and the Members of it.) We read of his instructing 'em, praying with 'em, and praising God, by singing together, &c. But I will not lay too much stress on this Example, because though our Blessed Lord did occasionally pray with his Disciples, as we find in several places of the Gospel-History, yet his Case and ours are vastly different. What was suitable for his Disciples, was not proper for him. He could not ordinarily be their Mouth in Prayer, for what they daily needed: He could not for

himself ask the Forgiveness of Sin, and the Mortification of Lust, and the Increase of Grace, &c.

But there is enough from the Holy Scriptures, to convince those that will seriously consider it, of the Duty of Family Religion, and Prayer as a part of it. For Instance, we read of *Joshua*, that he resolves for himself and Family, *I and the Men of my House will serve before the Lord*: That is, the Men who dwelt with him in his House. And we read of *Cornelius*, *Acts 10. 2.* that he was a devout Man, one that feared God with all his House, and gave much Alms to the People, and prayed always. He was a Roman Captain over the Italian Band, which attended the Roman Governor's Person as his Life-guard, and therefore probably of that Nation. This *Cornelius* is said to be a *Devout Man*. Whether he were a Profelyte to the Church of *Israel* or no, is doubtful, be sure not a Profelyte of the Covenant, or of Justice, for such were Circumcised. If he were an Uncircumcised Profelyte, or a Profelyte of the Gate, he was not incorporated into the Commonwealth of *Israel*. The Apostle *Peter* had a Vision first to authorize him to go to him.

him. And the Christians of the Circumcision exprest their Resentment for his Conversation with him, till they knew his Warrant, *Acts 11. 3.* Yet this Roman, this Souldier, this Centurion was accepted of God, as being prepared to believe in Christ, as soon as he should be revealed to him. He was a devout and good Man; and not only good himself, but chose such to be in his Family, as feared God. He was full of good Works, and constant in Prayer: and God testified his Acceptance of him, *Thy Prayers, and thine Alms are come up as a Memorial before God, Vers. 4.* Of a Truth I perceive, says the Apostle, that God is no respecter of Persons; but in every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, shall be accepted, *Vers. 39.* Here is a surprising Example of a devout Souldier, a devout Roman, spreading Religion in his Family; One that feared God with all his House, and prayed always. The Fear of God is an usual Expression, comprehensive of all Divine Worship, *2 Kings 17. 36, 37.* Let all the Earth worship him, *Psal. 66. 4.* Let all the Earth fear him, *Psal. 67. 7.* And Prayer being the principal part of it; we may suppose, that

as he feared God, and all his House, so he prayed with all his House unto God. And he himself seems so to explain it, I prayed to God in mine House at the ninth Hour; or with my Household, as it may be rendered. He afterwards called together his Kindred, and his near Friends, when Peter came; but mentions not the calling of his Household, as what was usual and supposed.

And the praying always, or continually, can hardly bear a less Sense, than the doing of it every Day: As the daily Sacrifice which God appointed the Jews, is called the continual Sacrifice, which was offered Morning and Evening, Dan. 8. 11. So Mephibosheth is said to eat Bread at the King's Table continually, 2 Sam. 9. 7. that is, at Meal-time every Day. Nature and Scripture both seem to concur to recommend Morning and Evening as the proper Season for Prayer. It is good to give Thanks unto the Lord, and to sing Praises to thy Name, O most High; to shew forth thy Loving-kindness every Morning, and thy Faithfulness every Night. Ps. 92. 1, 2. God is to be worshiped by all Persons, and all People, Ps. 22. 27, 28. Ps. 66. 4. and by Social Worship, Psalm 34. 3.

12. 12. The general Nature of Worship, and all the Essentials of true Divine Worship is found in the Worship of God by Families, as such. The Object, the End, and the Rule is the same.

And since there are many Commands in Scripture concerning Divine Worship, and this part of it, Prayer in particular, which are of general Extent, such as of praying always, and giving thanks always, and continuing in Prayer and Thanksgiving with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, every where lifting up holy hands, in every thing giving thanks, &c. 'twill be hard to obey all these Commands, and yet live in the neglect of Family Prayer. For by the Light of Nature we may from hence be able to determine the Performance of this Duty, to be every Day, as a proper Time, and in every House, as a proper Place for it. But if it were only permitted us, we are greatly wanting to our own Interest to neglect it. These general Rules and Precepts do at least warrant, and make lawful our Praying together every Day. We have leave to pray together, and shall we not use it? What if God should have forbidden

us ; if he should put any of our Families under an *Interdict* ; and say, You shall not pray to me : I will not receive a Sacrifice from you. Your Neighbours may pray to me every Morning and Night, I'll hear them, and accept them. As for you, you shall have no Family-Altar, or Sacrifice. Who would not be griev'd to be forbidden such a daily Privilege ? Who would not then use it, if they might ? And because the Evening and Morning do make one Day, as the Beginning and the End do comprehend the whole ; he that prays every *Morning* and *Evening*, may be said to pray *continually*, to pray *always*, to pray *without ceasing*.

Doth not the Light of Nature, which instructs us in the Being of God, and the Immortality of the Soul, oblige us to endeavour the good of those in our Families ? And as one proper means of their spiritual Welfare, it may direct the Master of a Family to pray with them ; there being *Family-Sins* to be confessed by us, and forgiven by God ; there being many *Temptations* every day to be resisted, *Wants* to be supplied, *Duties* performed, *Graces* exercised, *Crosses* prevented, *Mercies* acknowledged, &c. in Families, as such with re-

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spect unto all these, Family-Prayer and Worship is an excellent Means.

Some of those who had not the Advantage of Scripture-Revelation, have yet had *their Household-Gods*. The Eastern Nations had their *Teraphim*; the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans had their *Lares* and *Penates*, a Sort of Family-Gods, to rule, preserve, and defend them in their Houses; whom they worshipped and sacrificed unto in their Houses: and several of them had a particular Room set a-part for an *Oratory* to that purpose. The Heathen Poets, *Hesiod*, *Homer*, and others, mention their *daily Sacrifices* to their Gods *every Morning and Evening*; that they might prosper, and succeed by their Favour in all their Affairs: and their Practice may be urged for our *Conviction*. It seems a Prescription of the Law of Nature, that every Society wherein Men do unite, and joyn according to the Mind of God, should own their Dependance on him, by some Worship common to that Society; and as performed in the Name of it; especially is it so, as to an *Household or Family*, which is the Foundation of all other Societies. Hence there were *Sacrifices* peculiar.

34 Of Family Religion.

peculiar unto Families before the Law, wherein the Father of the Family was the sacred Administrator. So Job offer'd Burnt-Offerings for himself and Family, Chap. 1. 5. and Jacob for his, Gen. 35. And such Family-Sacrifices were famous among the * Heathens.

And

* An Eminent Instance hereof the Roman Historian gives us in C. Fabius, who when Rome was sack'd by the Gauls, and the Capitol besieged, upon the stated Time of his solemn Worship and Sacrifices of the Family of the Fabii, pass'd through the Enemies Camp to the Quirinal Hill, and discharged the accustomed *Sacra*, returning to the Capitol, without Disturbance or Affront from the Enemy. Liv. lib. 5. And the Family-Ceremonies in the Sacrifice of an Ose unto *Heracles*, by the *Helii* and *Pharii*, were adopted by *Romulus* and *Numa*, into the use of the whole People, the Posterity of those Families being made as it were their Publick Priests thereby. And after they had confirm'd the Administration of their *Sacra* in publick Solemnities for the whole Community, yet they left in use to single Persons and Families, to sacrifice for themselves as they saw good. For as they took up the former Course, probably from the Form and Example of *Mosai*cal Institution, so they did the latter from the Original Practice and Tradition of the World. Even the meanest of the People continu'd their Family-Libations. *Sacrima* they call'd the Wine which

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And shall the Pagans out-do us? Shall they be sensible of their Dependance in their Families on some Superiour Aids, so as to worship Stocks and Stones in their Houses, rather than have no Worship at all; and shall Christians live contentedly without the Worship of the true God in their Families? *All people will walk every one in the Name of his God, and shall not We resolve to walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever?* Mic. 4. 5.

IN SHORT, If God be the Founder, the Owner, the Governour and Benefactor of Families; If such little Societies be of his Appointment, and do both need and receive daily Mercies from him; it is but fit he should be worshipped, and owned every Day in particular Families. Before the giving of the Law to *Moses*, how was God worshipped

your Countrymen offered to *Baccho*, as *Festus* testifies; and *Caper*, the Vessel out of which they drew the Wine, whereof they made a *Libation* to *Jupiter*. *Strusert* and *Suo-peturaula*, were the Sacrifices of poor Families. And something in Remembrance of this Original Practice, continued among the People of God, after the giving of the Law. — Dr. *Owen* on the *Hebrews*, Vol. 2. Exer. cit. 10. §. 4.

shipped but in Families? Family-Worship was the first kind of Social Worship: Religion was at first confin'd to single Persons; upon the Increase of Mankind it begun in Families. Every Ruler of a Family was then a *Priest* to his own House, or offered his own Sacrifice, and governed his *Family*, not only as *such*, but as a Religious Society: Afterwards Religion spread into larger Societies. This was the first Power God intrusted Man with, to be the Head, and Ruler, and Father of a Family; to take care of the Welfare of that little Society, and of all that belonged to it: Especially to take care of Religion, and the Worship of God there. He was not only the Civil Governour, but the *Priest*, though not by proper *Office*, for that results not from the Light and Law of Nature, but depends on Institution, as *typical*, and representative of the Priesthood of Christ. I mention this, because it is commonly said, that the *Priesthood* belonged to the *Firstborn*, as a Branch of the *Primogeniture*; and that the Priesthood of every Family was in the Possession of the Firstborn, till the time of the *Levitical Law*. But this is

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not * proved from Scripture; what is commonly alledged from *Numb. 3. 41.* of the *Levites* being taken instead of the *Firstborn*, will conclude no such thing. God having delivered their *Firstborn* in *Egypt*, *Exod. 12. 23.* called for them to be sanctified to him, *Chap. 13. 22.* upon the Account of the special Propriety he had in them by that Deliverance; and not on the Account of any special Service, for many were unfit for that by reason of Age; and which is observable, God requires as well the *Firstborn* of *Beasts* to be sanctified, and redeemed. When therefore God would settle a way of Worship, he gave the *Israelites* liberty to redeem them, and instead of the *Firstborn*, he pitched on the *Tribe of Levi* for his own Service.

Besides, we find in Scripture, that the Younger were ordinarily preferred before the *Firstborn*, as *Abel* before *Cain*, *Seth* before *Japheth*, *Abraham* before his Elder Brethren, *Isaac* before *Ishmael*, *Jacob* before *Esau*, *Judah* and *Joseph* before

* *Bp. Stillingfleet's Irenicum, Part I. Chap. 4.* citing *Theodoret. quest. 108.* in *Gen. 8.* and *Ibid. Pith.* *Lib. 2. Ep. 47. & 48.*

fore *Reuben*, *Ephraim* before *Manasse*, *Moses* before *Aaron*, and *David* before the rest of his Brethren, although that was after the Law. From the Beginning doubtless the Father of the Family was the High-Priest to it, and the Duty of sacrificing was committed to him, and herein it is * probable he had the special Assistance of the Firstborn of the Family, whereby he might be initiated into his future Duty. But that Office of a Priest was not confin'd to the Elder Brother, for *Abel* offered Sacrifices in his own Person, while his Father and his Elder Brother were alive, as *Abraham* did after the Flood, while the Eldest Son of *Noah* was living; and when the Younger Sons of *Noah* were separated, and dispers'd into several distinct Families, they did not lose the Right of solemnizing the Worship of God thereby.

When the World increased, and larger Societies were set up, the Power of a Parent as Head of a Family was in some respects broken, and Parents had not the Power of Life and Death over their

* See Dr. *Owen* on the *Gifts*, vol. 2, exerc. 2, §. 6, 7, 8, 9.

their Children, as before : But much of the Power of a Parent, and Master over his own Family, is continued by God ; and therefore Children and Servants are commanded to obey their Parents and Masters, as well as to obey Civil Magistrates. Now I would argue thus, That if *Family-Worship*, at first, did not exclude *personal Religion*, and private Prayer to God by one alone, as doubtless it did not ; then the publick *Worship* of God (when many Families meet together) should not exclude *Family-Worship*, or the daily Invocation of God in particular Families, by as many of such a little Society as can come together. There is the same reason why *Family-Worship* and *Religion* should continue, after the publick *Worship* of God by many Families together is set up, as that *Personal Religion*, and secret *Prayer* should continue a Duty, after God began to be worship'd in Families.

I shall not insist upon Queen *Hester's* keeping a Fast with her Maids, which was extraordinary ; nor, enlarge on the Example of *Jacob*, who built an Altar, and called on the Name of the Lord, and called on his Family to pre-

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pare for it, *Gen. 35. 2, 3. Saying to his Household, and all that were with him, Put away the strange Gods, and let us build an Altar to Jehovah, &c.* His Grandfather *Abraham* circumcised all the Males in his House, brought 'em under the Bond and Seal of the Covenant; and wherever he resided with his Family for any considerable time, he built Altars, and offered Sacrifices. That dreadful Curse imprecated (or denounced rather, and predicted) upon the Families that call not upon God's Name, (though principally meaning Tribes of People; and by calling on the Name of God, worshipping the true God in opposition to Idolatry;) yet deserves to be considered, because by parity of Reason, it may extend to the lesser Societies, where the True God is not owned, and worshiped.

God has also promised to bless the Habitations of the Just, and he has often owned by his Providence his acceptance of Family-Religion and Worship. When all the Old World had neglected God, and corrupted their Ways, the true Religion continued but in the Family of *Noah*; He and his were saved from the Universal Deluge, when the rest were swept away by the Flood.

Agreeable



Agreeable to this is a Passage, frequently mentioned to this purpose, in Switzerland in the Canton of Bern, Anno Christi 1584, when a whole Village, consisting of ninety Houses, were overturned by an Earth-quake; there was but one Family excepted, and but one half House preserved; and in that half of the House that was preserved, the Master of the Family was earnestly praying to God, with his Wife and Children, while the Earth-quake destroyed all his Neighbours.

For the Instruction and Teaching of Children and Servants, as a part of family-Religion, there are sufficiently express Scriptures. *To bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord; To train them up in the way wherein they should go; And consequently to teach them to pray to God, and praise him. And the Example of a Parent or Master is one of the best ways of teaching them.* The Apostle tells us, *1 Tim. 5. 8.* That he that doth not provide for his own House and family, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. He that doth not provide Food and Raiment for those of his own Household, comes under this

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Character. And if he be so bad, who takes no care of the Welfare of their Bodies, what shall we think of him who has no Concern for their Souls, not to instruct them in their Duty to God, not to pray with them, not to read the Holy Scriptures to them? He, it may be, feeds and clothes his Children and Servants, as a kind Father and Master, and as an *English-Man*, but carries it to their Souls like a Barbarous *Indian*, or a Careless Infidel. As much more worth as the Soul is than the Body, so much worse is that Man that is careless of the Souls in his Family, than he that is careless of their Bodies: Such a one the Apostle says, has ~~denied the Faith~~, he cannot with any Face pretend to be a *Christian*. How shameful then is it, for Men to be admitted to the highest Privileges of Christians, I mean to the Table of the Lord, and yet neglect the Worship of God in their Families. We find in *Exod. xii. 43, 48.* that no Proselyte might presume to come to the Passover, unless his whole House, as well as himself, were *circumcised*, and professed the Jewish Religion. If this Law, as well as its Equity, were still in force, how few would

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now come to the holy Sacrament.

He that doth not provide for his own, is worse than an Infidel. He that would suffer their Bodies to starve, and does not give them sufficient proper Food, deserves this Censure and Reproach: much more doth he who neglects their Souls. It is not indifferent to you, whether your Children and Servants be fed, and clothed, and have necessary provisions, or no; whether they be nourished, or whether they be starved: And is it nothing to you whether they be saved or damned? You would not be accessory to the Murder of their bodies, and will you not be as careful to avoid the like, and greater Guilt with reference to their Souls?

If Parents had no Trust and Charge committed to them from God (who saith, *All Souls are mine*) with relation to the Souls of their Children; if Masters were to give no Account to God of their Servants, but whether they gave them Food and Wages, or. they might be concerned as to these things, but you are Stewards intrusted with the Care of their Souls, as well as their bodies. And it will be sad hereafter, for a Child to say before the Bar of Christ,

Christ, There stands my cruel Father or Mother, who never prayed with me, or instructed me in the Matters of Religion, and so I minded it not. The like for a Servant; he lived so many Years with such or such a Master, and never had any Assistance from him to further his Salvation.

Certainly as to Children, *Parents* are more especially obliged, as having greater and nearer Obligations to them, than any Ministers or Pastors can have to their People. Your Children are Parts of your selves, and if you are not concerned for their Souls, you are unnatural and cruel to them. It is from you, their immediate Parents, that they receive their corrupted Nature, their Pollution and Misery; and therefore you are bound to endeavour their Recovery and Cure. You will also condemn your selves, in being solicitous for their Bodily Welfare (which most are to an excess) while you neglect the Salvation of their Souls. And by your Care of their Souls, you provide for their Bodily Welfare too. God hath promised to bless the Posterity of his Servants. Tho the Church was continued in the Line of Isaac, yet

God 1693.

God promised to bless *Ishmael* for the sake of his Father *Abraham*. I will make him a great Nation, for he is thy seed; Gen. 21. 13. But remember they must die, and they are capable of Grace and Immortality; and will you only provide for them as you do for your Beasts? *Plutarch* taxing the Abuse of Parents, who strive to leave their Children Rich, and not Vertuous, saith, they do like those who are solicitous about the Shoe, but neglect the Foot. They depend on you for their Maintenance and Livelihood, and so you have an Advantage to promote their Good; they will hearken to your Counsels, when they will not regard what a Minister can say. You have an Interest in their Affections, joyn'd with an Authority over them; they are with you in their tender Years, and so your Work is the easier.

This is well described by an eloquent Pen. "God was confident concerning *Abraham*, that he would teach his Children; and Parents have great Power by strict Education, and prudent

* Bishop *Jr. Taylor's* Discourse of Baptism, 4.
1693. P. 54, 55.

"deat Discipline, to form the Minds of
 "Children to Vertue. *Joshua* did un-
 "dertake for his Household, *I and my*
 "*House will serve the Lord*; and for Chil-
 "dren we may better do it, because till
 "they are of perfect Choice, no Go-
 "vernment in the World is so great,
 "as that of Parents over their Children.
 "They rule over their Understand-
 "ings, and Children know nothing
 "but what they are told, and they be-
 "lieve it infinitely: And it is a rare
 "Art of the Spirit to engage *Parents*
 "to bring them up well in the *Nurture*
 "and *Admonition of the Lord*. They
 "are Persons obliged by a superinduced
 "Band; they are to give them In-
 "structions and holy Principles, as
 "they give them Meat. It is certain
 "Parents may better stipulate for their
 "Children, than the Church can for
 "Men or Women. They may be Hy-
 "pocrites, and the next day may
 "change their Resolution, and grow
 "weary of their Vow; and that is the
 "most that Children can do when
 "they come of Age; and it is much
 "in the Parents whether the Children
 "shall do any such thing or no——.
 "For Education can introduce a Ha-
 "bit,

bit, and a kind of second Nature, as
 against which Children cannot kick;
 unless they do some Violence to
 themselves, and their Inclinations.
 And altho it fails so often, when
 ever it fails, yet we pronounce pri-
 dently concerning future things,
 when we have a less Influence into
 the Event, than in the present Case.
 This would succeed oftner, if Parents
 were faithful in their Duty to them
 while young. It would commonly suc-
 ceed if you began betimes, according
 to the Comparison which one makes
 of Childhood and Youth, to Water
 put on a Table; it runs after you that
 way which you draw your Finger.
 They may be prejudiced against a holy
 life, or settled in a way of Sin, be-
 fore they are capable of profiting by
 publick preaching. But your teaching
 them at home, as it may begin sooner,
 so will prevail more: and they will ac-
 knowledge your Teaching to be with
 more Authority than ours. I fear, saith
 a great & Divine, that many of those,
 who are otherwise good People, do
 little or nothing to kill the little
 child in your Hands to the
 See more largely, Mr. Baxter's Saints Rest,
 Part 3. Chap. 14. Sect. 11.

Of Family Religion.

little understand, or consider the Authority, which their Teachers have over them from Christ. They know, it may be, to value their Gifts, but think not themselves bound to learn of them, and obey them in the Lord, by virtue of their Office. However, the Obligation of Ministers to teach you and your Children, will not cancel your Duty of Teaching them at home; no more than that because Magistrates must govern you and your Children, you should therefore not govern your own Families.

How many yet misimprove all these Advantages, to do the Devil's Work, and teach their Children the way to Hell, by inducing them to sin betimes; by instructing them to be proud and revengeful, to backbite and rail, to speak filthily, to curse and swear, to scorn Holiness, and the Word, and Ministers, and Ways of God. How much worse, *says one*, are such Parents than the Devil himself! As it is worse for a Mother to dash out the Brains of her own Child against a Wall, than for a Wolf, or a Dog, or a Bear to kill her Child. It is in your Hands to do them the greatest Kindness, or Cruelty

in all the World: And if you saw a Burning Furnace, much more the Flames of Hell; what would you think of that Parent, who could find in his heart, to cast the Child into it, or to put him into the hands of one that would?

If therefore you love them, shew it in those things wherein their greatest Interest is concerned. Do not say you love them, and yet be so unmerciful as to damn them: And what can you possibly do more to damn them, than to bring them up in Ignorance, and Sensuality, and neglect of God? The Devil damns none but by tempting to Sin, and drawing them from Godliness; for there is no other way to Hell. But it is no great wonder; for you do by *Your Children*, but as you do by *Your Selves*: You say, you desire not to damn your selves, but yet you do it: So it is with respect to them. Shall he that casts his Child into the Sea, say he intends not to drown him? Or he that sends him into a Pest-house, or a Stews, say he intends not to endanger his Health? Or that trains him up in Thievery, and Robbing, say that he intends not to have him hanged? It is all one in effect; for the Law determines

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it, and the Judge will take care to have it done.

As ever you would not be charged by God with the Murder of their Souls, and have them cry out against you in everlasting Fire, as the Means of their Ruine, be now faithful and diligent for their Salvation. It will be sad for those, who dedicated their Children to God by Baptism in their Infancy, that afterwards they should bring them up for the Devil, the World, and the Flesh; as God complains, *Ezek. 16. 20. Thou hast taken thy Sons, and thy Daughters, which thou hast born UNTO ME, and these thou hast sacrificed to be devoured.* That Sin in the Israelites, to sacrifice their Sons and their Daughters to Devils, *Psal. 106. 37.* was less than that of Negligent and Prophane Parents, who sacrifice not only the Bodies, but the Souls of their Children to Satan, and so bring them forth to the *Murderer, Hos. 9. 13.*

Upon the whole, I hope I have said enough to recommend and urge the Duty, till I hear what is further objected, besides the want of express positive Scripture. Some of the most considerable

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The First Letter.

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considerable Objections, I shall consider in the next Letter. Let Conscience be faithful, and if you admit of Conviction by what you have read, take heed how you stifle it, or delay to do that, which you cannot deny but you ought to do.

I am Yours.

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Of Family Religion.

THE SECOND LETTER.

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I Am sensible that a great deal more might be said, and more *Methodically*, to prove and urge so important a Duty, as *Family Religion and Worship*, than what I have mentioned in the former Letter. What is done in the midst of many Interruptions, now a little, and then a little, cannot be expected should have that Beauty, Order, and Exactness of Method and Connexion, which you may think necessary. However, I proceed to what I promised, in answer to some **Objections**: Only let me premise, that it is foretold concerning the days of the *Messiah*, when the Spirit of Grace and Supplication shall be poured out on the House of *David*, and on the Inhabitants

tants of *Jerusalem*; when the Multitude of the *Isles* shall rejoyce, and all *Flesh* shall see the *Glory* of the *Lord*; That *Holiness* to the *Lord*, (which was the *Inscription* on the *Mitre* of the *High Priest*) shall be upon the very *Bells* of the *Horses*, and the *Pots* in the *Lord's House*, or the *Ordinary Pots* in the *Kitchens* of the *Temple*, shall be like the *Bowls* before the *Altar*, * which received the *Blood* of the *Sacrifices*; Yea every *Pot* in *Judah*, and *Jerusalem*, shall be *Holiness* unto the *Lord of Hosts*: That is, the *Utensils* of *Private Houses* shall be dedicated to *God*, every *Family* shall be a *Temple*, wherein *God* shall be worshiped.

And as *God* required of the *Jews* a *Continual Burnt-Offering*, or a *daily Sacrifice* of two *Lambs*; the one in the *Morning*, the other in the *Evening*: It may be expected that so often (at least) he should be worshiped every *Day* in the *Families* of his *People*. Our *daily Sacrifices*, by *Prayer* and *Praise*, under the fuller *Dispensation* of *Gospel-Grace*, should not be fewer or less frequent than theirs of another sort.

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* *Zech.* 12. 10. chap. 14. 20, 21.

But I hope I have said enough in the *Former Letter* to recommend the Worship of God in Families ; Doubtless one Advantage of it would be, to fit us for those other *Duties*, and Parts of *Worship*, which are sometimes urged to excuse the Neglect of *this*. For how many are ready to say, we pray to God every day in *Secret*, and we joyn every Week with others in *Publick Worship* ; and what need of any more ? Whereas one part of our Duty is so far from interfering with the other, that the one will help to the better performance of the other. By praying in *Secret*, you will be inabled to pray in your *Family* : and by both these may obtain Assistance and Success in the *Publick Worship* of God ; and by attending upon the Publick Worship, you will be fitted for the other parts of your Duty in Secret and Private. You are obliged to pray in Secret, if you had no Families ; and it is very doubtful, in a numerous Family, whether all the Members of it do daily pray in Secret, or not.

If it be said, that there are very many of those who make a great Profession of Religion, who yet live in the neglect

neglect of Family Worship; I answer, that is no wonder, because there be many who profess to be what they are not; who have a Name to live, and are dead. But if they be real, upright Christians, they are either under the Power of a present Temptation, or under the Conduct of an erring Mind, as misled by some False Teachers, &c. and so they will neglect this Duty no longer, than till their Errour be removed; or the present Difficulties in the way of this Practice are got over; which many say they would be glad of, but cannot yet attain.

As in some Families it is pretended they have not *Time* every day for such Work: My Trade will not allow me, I have a Charge of Children that must be maintained, and my Business must be minded; or I am obliged to be Abroad early and late; I cannot read the Holy Scriptures in my Family, and pray every day with those of the Family, for want of *Time*.

I have often thought of this Objection this Winter, and how the Providence of God has removed it, as to a great many Families, to their sad Disappointment and Sorrow. What else

mean the many Complaints of Starving Families, for want of Trade? They have Time enough now to pray, for they have no Work. Let such reflect upon themselves, and consider how righteous it is from God, that whereas, while they had Trade and Business, they would not find Time to pray, God should punish their Neglect by blasting their Endeavours; and now they want Trade, and would be glad of Work to employ their Time.

But what need is there for any to be so long in Family-Worship, as to hinder the Business of their particular Calling? Though it may be, all in the Family cannot come together, yet some may, and possibly the greater part, if a little Prudence, and Consideration be used, as to the choice of the Time.

And if less time were spent in the Morning, in most cases there might be more redeemed in the Evening. Many might redeem time from the Coffee-House, and from the Tavern, and from time-wasting Clubs, and Meetings by appointment, without Business; while their Children and Servants at home are exposed to Temptation, and the

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Worship of God neglected there, or hurried over slightly, towards midnight, between sleeping and waking.

Every one will grant, that Success in his Trade and Calling depends upon the Blessing of Heaven; but most live as if they believed nothing of it. For it can hardly be denied, that to begin the Day with God, and heartily implore his *Blessing*, is the best way to have it. If what you get be not accompanied with the Divine Blessing, you will have little Comfort in such Increase. And how can it be proved, that it is your Duty to grasp so much Worldly Business, as is inconsistent with the worshipping of God in your Families, and having time to mind the Souls of those committed to your Charge? *Business*, you say, *must be minded*. Your lawful proper Business, it is true, must be so, in its place: But, as one says, *this Devil of (pretended) Business, has destroyed and damned more Souls, than all the Devils in Hell besides.*

How easily can God, by Sickness, or grievous Pains, unfit you for the business of your Calling, or disable your servants by Sickness, if he be provoked by your neglect of him in your

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Families? He may either blast all your Diligence; the Curse of God shall blow upon you; you shall labour much and get nothing. Or he may disable you and yours from following your Trade and Business. O how easily can God make you know, that if you will not find a time to pray, you must have a time to be sick, as well as others! How soon, and suddenly may he summon you by Death to his Judgment-Seat! Think now, whether, when you shall appear there, you will pretend the want of time for this Work. Let Conscience speak the Truth; Is it not that you want a Heart? God allows us a sufficient *Time* for our particular Calling. If our Hearts were filled with Love to God, and awed with his Holy Fear, we should not rob him of that which belongs to his Service. The Grace of God to sanctify our Hearts, would answer and remove a thousand such Pretences.

There be many, who cannot plead the want of Leisure, who pretend the want of *Parts*, and *Gifts* to instruct and teach others, or to pray with them. But let them seriously accustom themselves to secret Prayer, and they may quickly

quickly learn to pray in their Families. Get but your Hearts affected in a due manner with Family Wants, and Sins, and Mercies; and you will soon be able out of the abundance of the Heart, to express your selves sufficiently well: For it is not fine Words, and good Language that God regards, and is pleased with, but a serious, reverend, holy, thankful Heart. You do not want words to express your Desires in other Cases; nor would you here, if you were to beg your own Life, or that of a dear Relation, of an earthly King or Judge. It is a shame for Christians, who have lived long under the Ministry of the Gospel, and have such Advantages of the Bible in a known Tongue, and of so many useful practical Books, to pretend the want of Gifts for this Duty. However, rather use a *Form*, and take the Assistance of a Book for a while, than wholly neglect the Duty. Almost all the Old Divines (called *Puritans*) acknowledged the Lawfulness of a *Form of Prayer*, and advised the use of one in this Case. It is better to own and acknowledge God, and do something in this kind, though with some Imperfection, than affront

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affront him, and despise him, by a total neglect. And for some Masters of Families, (I know not, all Circumstances considered, but) the use of a good Form, may be more advisable, and more for the good of those with whom they joyn, than to pray without One. All things should be done for *Edification*; and for those to use a Form, who cannot otherwise do so well, is for *Edification*: And Experience will prove that some cannot do so well without one.

I deny not, but the Spirit of Grace is a Spirit of Supplication, and ready to assist and enable us in some measure to pray: so that if you neglect not the Gift that is in you, you would increase in this, and other Gifts by Exercise. The Holy Scriptures will furnish you with Matter and Expressions; and if you study your own Hearts, and observe the state of your Family, you will be competently able to apply them: And God will afford you that Assistance of his Holy Spirit which is needful. As in the Case of *Moses*, he excuses himself from speaking to *Pharaoh*, as God would have him, because he was not eloquent, but *slow of speech*.

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The Lord said to *Moses*, *Exod. 4. 11.* *Who maketh the Dumb to speak? Who hath made Man's Mouth? Have not I the Lord?* Now therefore go, and I will be with thy Mouth, teach thee what thou shalt say. His Call to speak to *Pharaoh* was Extraordinary, and so was his promised Assistance from God. Yours to Family Prayer is Ordinary; and the Ordinary Help, and Assistance you therein need, you may likewise expect.

It is a greater Discouragement to others from the daily Worship of God in their Families, that they are often composed of such Persons, as care not to joyn in such Duties: Or they are such Scoffers, that it is a scruple whether they should be suffered to be present, if they were willing. Some had rather pray alone, than endeavour, or desire such Company; they think they had better leave them out, than have their presence, who will not heartily joyn in the Requests that are made to God, and who desire not his Grace, or seek his Favour.

To such it may be said, That it is the Duty even of wicked Men to pray to God: and you know not what success their joyning with you may be
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attended with. Some have dated their first Conviction and Conversion, from *Family Prayer and Instruction*. You knowing the Sins of those in your Family, should be very serious in the Confession of Sin; and God may touch their Hearts, and give them Repentance. However, if you look to your own Hearts, and do not regard Iniquity there, the Wickedness of others in the Family shall not be laid to your Charge, while you do what lies in you for their Recovery. The Presence of *Judas* with our Lord and Saviour, when he prayed with his Disciples, did not render them unacceptable to God: For *I know*, says *Christ* to his Father, *thou hearest me always*. If you are sincere in your Worship, the Presence of unworthy Persons will not obstruct your Acceptance with God. Another Man's Unbelief will not prejudice thy Faith. If you should scruple to pray in your Families on that account; What think you of a Minister's Prayer in the Publick Congregation? If any neglect Family Worship on this Pretence, they are most likely to be such, as refuse to come to the Lord's Table, because of the Admission of supposed unworthy Persons.

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But how is it that they come to hear the Word, and join in publick Prayer in the Congregation, while this Objection is stronger there, than with reference to Prayer in their own Houses?

The Authority of Parents as to their Children is so manifest, and their Duty to oblige them to join in the Worship of God is so plain; that it is principally as to scornful, or stubborn *Servants*, that this Objection speaks. And as to them, unless they prove much otherwise than you thought they would, you were greatly to blame in admitting such: And after trial of other Means for their Conviction and Cure, if they can be removed, you ought to do it, *Psal. 101. 4, 5, 7. A froward Heart shall depart from me, a Slanderver will I cut off; He that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my sight, or dwell in my House.* But where is the Authority of the Head of a Family all this while? Should they not observe your Orders in Matters of Trade and Business, you would quickly let them know you were their Masters. And does that Relation signify nothing to them, while they dwell under your Roof, and are imployed in your Service? Doth not the Fourth Commandment:

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ment suppose a Master's Authority to bring his Family to worship God with him? And your Concern for their Souls obligeth you to endeavour it.

There is one very common Objection, that I fear, has too much of sad Truth for the Foundation of it, viz. That many of those, who pray in their Families, and read the Holy Scriptures there, and keep up the External of Religion beyond their Neighbours, do yet live no better, than such as pray not; their Children are no better than other Mens Children; their Servants are no better than other Mens Servants; they themselves no better than their prayerless Neighbours: They are one thing on their Knees, and another on their Feet. They are as vain and worldly, as proud and passionate, as hard to the Poor, as false in their Dealings, as revengeful and inexorable, as others, &c.

Would to God there were no ground for this Objection. We be to the World because of such Offences, but we be to them by whom they come. Who can tell what unspeakable Mischief such do, who keep up the Worship of God in their Families, and yet

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walk disorderly in their daily Con-
versations? Who begin with God in the
Morning, and keep Company with the
Devil all the Day after. What Stum-
bling-blocks do they lay in the way of
ignorant Children, and ungodly Ser-
vants, and Neighbours, who are ac-
quainted with it? They tempt them to
be *Atheists*, and deny God, and make
them question the Reality of Religion.
But whatever Hypocriſie any ſuch may
be guilty of in ſuch like Duties, it will
not diſcharge you from the Obligation
to perform them ſincerely. You may
as well reſuſe to join in publick Wor-
ſhip, becauſe ſome conſtant Hearers
are no better than ſome of thoſe who
ſtay away, and turn their Backs upon
all ſuch poſitive Inſtitutions.

However, it is not the Fruit of their
praying, but the want of Seriouſneſs
and Sincerity, which provokes God to
leave them to the Power of Temptati-
on. It is not long of Chriſt, and of
the Holy Scriptures, and of Religion,
and of Chriſtianity, that any profeſſing
Chriſtians are ſo bad. No Ruler was
ever ſo ſevere againſt Sin, as Jeſus
Chriſt; no Law was ever ſo ſtrict in
the forbidding Sin, as the Laws of
Chriſt:

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Christ: The Rule is streight, and the Christian Religion is not to be blamed, because some that profess it are not true to their own Profession: They condemn themselves, and dishonour God, and reproach their Lord and Saviour, and without Repentance he will condemn them too; *Psal. 50.17. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thy self; but I will reprove thee, and set thy Sins in order before thee. I will reject your Sacrifices, I will spread the Dung of your solemn Services before your Face; Your very Prayers shall witness against you.*

A Caution yet is needful here; To take heed of bearing false Witnesses, or easily believing one against our Neighbour. Do not hastily credit every Story you are told, against such as profess Religion. For the Devil employs a great many to do his Work, by defaming and discrediting such. Every lesser Fall of such a one shall be blazoned: Though it were but a single Fault, committed but once, and soon and heartily repented of, and seldom or never relapsed into; it shall yet be longer talk'd of, and more aggravated, than the

the customary, continued, foul Miscarriages of others. This is seen daily among such, whose Hearts are filled with Enmity against real Holiness.

Granting therefore, (what is too notorious to be denied) that *some* Few, who pray to *God* every Day, do yet live as if they believed there were *none*; yet compare the Families of such as daily worship God together, with the Families of others, that neglect God and Religion; and it is not ordinarily true, that the *former* are no better than the *latter*: The Families of such are commonly the Nurseries of Religion. Was not *Noah's* Family better than the drowned World, though there were one *Cham* in it? as there was one *Judas* in the Family of *Christ* Himself? What would you think of a Man, says Mr. *Baxter*, who, looking over his Neighbour's Garden, when his own is all over-run with Weeds, and wholly neglected, should see in his Neighbour's Ground here and there a Weed, mixt with much better Stuff; and thereupon should say, These Men that bestow so much Pains about their Gardens, in dunging and weeding, &c. yet they have Weeds in their Garden,
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as well as those that do nothing; therefore who would be at so much pains? Thus foolishly do People talk of those that pray, and read, and instruct their Families, and hear Sermons, &c. they have their Faults, as well as others; wicked Persons amongst them, as well as others; their Children and Servants are bad, as well as ours. But they consider not, that it is not the whole Garden that is over-run with Weeds, as yours is, it is but *here and there* a Weed; and as soon as they spy any, they pluck them up, and do what they can to prevent their growth and spreading.

There is some Difficulty indeed as to those whose Lot is cast into *prayerless Families*, who would be glad with all their Hearts, to have the Worship of God kept up; but have either no power, or prevalency to bring it about. My Lot is cast into such an ignorant, worldly, prophane Family, says a religious Servant, where they call not upon the Name of God from Week to Week, or at most, never more than once a Week. If this be the Case of an *Apprentice*, and bound by his Parents, who should have chosen better for him; he may bear it the better, as hoping

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God will not charge it as his Fault. But if you rashly engaged your selves into such a Family, because it was a place of more Ease, or more Profit; you ought to repent, and beg of God forgiveness; and be afraid lest some spiritual Judgment, and it may be temporal too, should follow you. You ought to remove into a better Air, as soon as you can conveniently. But let me beg you, as you tender the Honour of God, and the Credit of Religion; while you stay in such a wicked family, endeavour with utmost Humility, Modesty, Seriousness, and Circumspection, to adorn your Profession; to leave a Conviction in the Conscience of those with whom you dwell, that *serious Godliness doth make the best Servants*. How sad is it, if by you who profess Religion, your ungodly Masters or Fellow-Servants should be hardened, and stumbled, and prejudiced against the holy Ways of God! It may fall out that if you carry it so, as to win the Love of all, you shall have an Opportunity offered, humbly to suggest, and urge something to promote Family-Prayer and Worship; and possibly obtain to have it begun. Be sure, however, that you be
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more diligent and constant in secret Prayer. The less help you have in the Family, the more should you redeem to be alone with God. But Servants who value the Welfare of their Souls, and their Improvement in Grace, should take heed what Families they chuse to dwell in. Do not, out of choice, place yourselves in a House where God doth not dwell; to which the Curse of God according to his Word, is threatened. You know he dwells in the *House of Prayer*; His own House is such, and ours should be so too; and he inhabits the Praises of his People.

My case is yet worse, may some object; I am *Son to a prayerless Father*, and I cannot leave the House; Or I am *Wife to a Husband that minds not God*, or his own Soul, much less mine, or any in the Family. The like Advice as was given before to religious Servants, is fit to be taken here; *Viz.* to spend the more time in *secret Prayer*, and *Closet Devotion*, and to pray the more earnestly and fervently for such a Relation, who is the Head of a Family, and yet neglects the Duty of his place. The holy fervent Prayer of a believing Child, or Wife, may help to
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save an unbelieving Parent, or Husband; It may obtain Grace from God to turn his Heart. In the next Sickness, or under the next worldly Cross or Disappointment, or Family-strait and Affliction, you may have a Season offer'd with Meekness to suggest this, and other Duties; and who can tell the Success? However, take heed to adorn your Profession; and let such near Relations, with whom you are obliged to dwell, be convinced by your Christian Carriage, of the Amiability and Excellency of a Holy Life, and be made to think and speak well of practical Godliness.

If the *Parent*, or *Husband* be either unfit or unwilling to pray in the Family; can you not obtain that some other may do it in his room and stead? Though it be the proper Work of the *Master of the Family*, yet in many Cases another may be substituted; even an holy *Servant* sometimes, with the Master's leave and desire. Or, in his Sickness or Absence, I know not why, in divers Cases, the *Wife*, who is to share in the Government of the Family, may not perform *Family-Prayer*, at least with those of her own Sex; and
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with all the Family if she be a *Widow*; and if she be a *Wife*, why not in the Husband's Absence? For if he do not his Duty in this particular, what reason is there, that she may not be the Mouth of the Family to God in Prayer, rather than it should be omitted?

These plain things I offer'd and recommended with Seriousness to remove the common Objections, Pleas, and Excuses for the neglect of *Family-Religion* and *Worship*, and touching the Duty of the several Relations in Religious Families. If any may be hereby confirm'd, or convinc'd, I know you will rejoice with me, and bless God.

I am Yours.

of

Of Family Religion.

The THIRD LETTER.

S I R,

Without farther Preface, I continue to make good my Promise, by sending you the Remainder of my Papers on this Subject, containing some *Directions*, and *Counsels* relating to *Family Religion*.

You who are *Heads of Families*, are in the first place obliged to be very Careful, and Circumspect, Serious and Exemplary in your Lives: (you ought to take heed, that you give no Example of Vice before *Inferiours*.) They will sooner Imitate you in what is *Evil*, than *Good*. Let them have no Encouragement or Countenance given them to Sin, by any thing they see you do. You will quickly lose all Authority,

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and Power to reprove, or suppress their Evils, if your own Example countenance them in it. It is altogether unlikely, that Religion should thrive among Children and Servants, where the *Parent* or *Master* gives a Pattern of Drunkenness, or Lewdness, of Injustice, Deceit, and Fraud; or only keeps up the Worship of God, to cloak his own Wickedness, or serve some secular Design. Wo to those *Parents* and *Masters*, whose Children are Witnesses of their Impiety, and like enough to follow them (without a wonderful Grace) to their eternal Ruine. *Never Parent had such a wicked Child*, said a *bad Father* once to a *Rebellious Son*; Yes Sir, replied the Impudent Youth, *My Grandfather had*. Some have inquired for what reason the Prophet *Elisha* called for Vengeance on the *Children* that mocked him, and stiled him *Bald-pate*, *2 Kings* 2. 23. when many of them, it is probable, hardly understood what they said. The Reason assigned, is this, because the *Children* learnt that Language from their *Parents*; and God punished the *Parents* in the Death of the *Children*, and both at once. Some of the Heathens have been very wary and

and cautious, not to speak an uncomely word in the presence of their Children. Certainly the Head of a Christian Family is obliged to behave himself *Wisely* in an upright way, and to walk within his House with a *Perfect Heart*, *Psal.* 101. 2. and in all things to shew himself a *Pattern of Good Works*, *Tit.* 2. 7. A prudent, grave, chearful, sincere Deportment, as becometh Saints, would recommend Religion, and diffuse the savour of it to all about it. But if you give them never so good Counsel, they will sooner be influenced by a bad Life, than by the best of Words. All your good Precepts and Counsels, will be as Water spilt on the ground, if not accompanied by a good Example. What you would reprove, and amend in their Words or Actions, let them be sure to hear nothing of it in your Discourse, and see nothing of it in your Practice: You must lead them the way in Humility and Charity, in the Government of the Tongue, Passions, Appetite; in the Redemption of Time, in Prayer, and love to the Holy Scriptures, and the Ordinances of the Gospel, &c.

How can a drunken or unrighteous *Father* or *Master* expect his Children, and Servants should be sober and faithful? Can you hope to teach them *Sobriety*, and they see you are *Intemperate*? or *Meekness*, when they see you cannot govern your Passions? They will sooner learn your Sin, than your Trade. And is not the Money given with such an Apprentice very ill bestowed? One, Two, Three Hundred Pounds, or more, to have them taught to serve the Devil, and damn their Souls, by the Example of a wicked Master? But such Masters shall have double Damnation. Therefore let your own Example teach all your Relations, that Holiness and Unblamableness, in Tongue and Life, which you desire they should learn and practise.

But besides your own Example, you are obliged by all other ways to endeavour their Spiritual and Eternal Good. You are *worse than Infidels*, if you provide not what is *Needful*, and *Fir* for them as to their Temporal Life; much more if you neglect their Souls. O look upon them with Pity and Compassion; help them, as knowing their Ignorance, their Temptations, and Danger! Remember,

member, they must shortly die, and be saved or perish for ever. Use all Advantages you have to do them good: Let them not be betrayed to eternal Ruine, by your neglect. Ministers, by publick Preaching, cannot do so much to further their Salvation, as you; and it is very little we can hope to do, without your Assistance. You can speak (sharply enough sometimes) of unfaithful Ministers, who neglect the Souls of their People; but consider not your own Guilt and dreadful Reckoning, upon the like Account. You expect more Duty sometimes from *One* Minister, than *Six* can perform, while you make no Conscience of neglecting your own Duty, in your proper Sphere.

It will be a dreadful Meeting in the Day of Recompence, to have your Children or Servants to accuse their Parents and Masters; saying, I was so many Years in my Father's House; or I lived so long with such a Master, who never concerned himself about my Soul: I had never been a Servant of Sin, and a Firebrand of Hell, if he had done his part to prevent it. The like will be true of ungodly *Husbands*

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and *Wives*, who notwithstanding the Duty and Profession of the dearest Love, do little or nothing to save one another from the Wrath to come. O cruel Husband! O cursed Wife! It was long of *You*, that I am now a lost, undone Creature; You never did any thing to assist my Salvation, it was long of *You*, that I came to this Miserable End; *You* neither by Example, or Discourse, or Prayer, or Admonition, &c. discovered any Care for your own Soul, or for mine. Yea how many in such Relations, do much to hinder, and obstruct the Happiness and Salvation of those, whom they are most concerned and obliged to help! For if the one be ungodly, and the other be an awakened serious Christian; the *Latter* shall commonly find the greatest Opposition and Difficulty, and Hinderance in Religion, from him, or her, who should have given the greatest Help and Assistance.

Remember therefore, that besides Prayer in your House, you have other Endeavours to use, for the Salvation of those that live with you. You mock God by praying for the conversion of Children and Servants, if you do not otherwise endeavour it: If you do not endeavour

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to convince them of their Sin, and of their need of Christ and his Grace; if you do not recommend him as the best Master; and put them in mind of the uncertainty of this Life, and of the certain Account they must give to God another day, of all their Time, and Talents, &c. And yet this neglect is now so common, that they are reckoned *Good Parents*, and *Good Masters*, who will but give their Children and Servants leave to be good, and go to Heaven without them: Who will not hinder their Inferiours from serving God. Whereas, you have much to do of Positive Duty, to * inform their Minds, to furnish their Memories, to rectify their Wills, to quicken their Affections, to keep tender their Consciences, and restrain their Tongues, and watch over their outward Carriage; to make them hate Sin, and love Holiness, and prize the Bible, and delight in the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ, and like good Company, and dislike all others, &c.

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* See Mr. Baxter's *Saints Rest*, Part. 3. Chap. 14. *Stiff*. 16.

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And to what End hath God given you *The Authority of Parents, or Masters*, if not to prevent Sin, and to promote Holiness in your Families? Humane Nature is so corrupt, that (unless in some few with whom the Spirit of God begins very early, and the Effects of Holy Baptism are discovered in Childhood) there need to be great Restraints put upon it, by those who have Power and Authority over Young People. Your Authority must be kept up, lest you should be despised by those that you should Rule. Labour therefore to understand the Nature, Use, and Extent of that Authority, with Relation to all in your Family. And the more you grow in Knowledge and Holiness, and walk according to the Gospel-Rule; the better will you preserve your Authority among all your Inferiours. Humility and Wisdom, and circumspect Walking, will enable you to do them the more good, in the use of that Power which God has given you. The Indulgence, and Allowance of Children in what is sinful, you know did highly provoke God in the case of *Eli*, and how dear did it cost him? That *his Sons made themselves*
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The Third Letter.

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wile, and he restrained them not, 1 Sam. 3. 13. You must not let Wickedness dwell in your Tabernacle, Job 11. 14. or in those of your Family. They will observe your Orders, and regard your Commands; if you do not indiscreetly lose your Authority, by not keeping your distance, or suffering them to be too bold with you; or on the other hand making them too strange, so as to be fearful and discouraged, (I here speak especially of Children:) If what you resolve upon, and order, in commanding what is good, or forbidding what is evil, you see be punctually observed, still managing all with Affection and Love; and manifesting the Honour of God, and the Interest of their Souls, and Salvation, to have been your greatest Motive. And remember, that Commendation when they do well is as needful, as Reproof and Correction, when they sinfully transgress; which also ought to be without Partiality, or the causeless cockering, or countenancing of one above the rest.

The like may be said, though with some difference, with respect to Your Servants. Be Just, Compassionate, and Loving to them, but lose not your Au-

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thority as a Master: Be Faithful and Affectionate in your Counseling of them for the good of their Souls. But if they be refractory and stubborn, and slight your Advice, and go on in Sin, and wax worse and worse, and deride serious Godliness in their Fellow-Servants; you must use other Methods, or get rid of them, as soon as you can. You are to take care, that Wickedness dwell not within your House, without Admonishing and Reproving of it. You must warn them who are unruly, and of others have Compassion, making a difference. Some must be rebuked sharply, others save with fear, pulling them out of the Fire, *Jude* 22, 23 Verses.

As to those who have Trades and Families, but God hath not blessed them with *Children*, or hath taken them away by Death; their Care, and Labour, and Trust is thereby lessened, and they ought to be the more careful with respect to their *Servants*. They have many Considerations to keep them from Repining, or Sorrowing much for the want of Children, upon the Account of the Duty, the Pains, the Care, and Grief of Heart, which they are freed

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from: For in this dissolute Age, how few Children answer the Hopes, Desires, and Pains of Parents? Or prove Comforts to them when they grow up? If God had given you Children, or prolonged their Lives; what a Life of Trouble and Sorrow might They probably have passed in this World? besides the constant Fear you would have had of their Sin and Damnation: which may be put in the Ballance against the *Uncertain Comforts* of those who have Children, abstracting from that Consolation, which arises from the faithful discharge of Duty to them.

More particularly, it is advisable, with Family Prayer, to joyn *Serious Reading of the Holy Scriptures* every Day, and frequent Catechizing, or Instructing of Inferiours in the Principles of Religion. *Abraham* had such *Trained, Catechized Servants* in his House. *These things that I command thee*, says God to his Antient People, *shall be in thy Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children*, Deut. 4. 9. chap. 11. 19. *Teach a Child in the way he should go, and when he is Old, he will not depart from it*, Prov. 4. 4. chap. 22. 6. 2 Tim. 1, 3. Acquaint them by little and little with the

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the great Doctrines of Christianity; give them Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, as they are able to receive, and bear it. Acquaint them betimes with the Word, and Works of God, *When you sit in the House, or walk by the Way, or lie down, or rise up;* by asking them Questions, and putting them upon asking you. *Abraham's Example* is approved, and recommended by God in this matter, *Gen. 18. 19. For I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord.*

Never did any Age afford better Helps for *Catechizing*, than this; there being so many excellent Catechisms, or Summaries of Christian Religion, already printed, and easy to be had. If any of you want a Method for Regular Catechizing in your Families, as suppose upon a Lord's-day Evening, or once a Week; let me mention one, which is practised by many with good Success, in some Counties of this Nation; *viz.* Let the Master of the Family begin with a short Invocation of God, praying for his Presence, Assistance and Blessing; and then ask the younger sort *Three Questions* out of the *Assemblies*

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Catechism, and upon each of the three Answers, ask the explicatory Questions in Mr. *Joseph Allen's* *Catechism*, or Mr. *Lye's*, so that by answering *Yes* or *No*, you will perceive whether they understand the matter treated of. After this, read *The fuller Explication* of those *Three Questions* in some larger *Catechism*, as that of Mr. *Thomas Vincent*; and then close with a short Prayer; and if you can, *Sing a Psalm*. All which may be done in an Hour, and you will find it very profitable both for younger and elder People.

The reading of the Holy Scriptures frequently in your Families, as well as in your Closets, upon the Week-days, as well as upon the Lord's-day, I hope I need not use many Arguments to recommend. *Deut. 11. 18.* They are able to make us wise unto Salvation, and they are suitable to every Case, that you or yours can be in. They that cannot read, or will not read, or have not so much time to read, may be profited by your reading the Holy Scriptures in your Family with them. The *Singing of Psalms or Hymns*, in Christian Families, where there are enough who are able to joyn in that part of Worship,

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ship, is also a very commendable and excellent part of Family-Religion, *Col. 3. 16. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Especially on the Lord's Day.*

And that I would next speak of, because I am perswaded, that no Family-Religion can be duly kept up, without the Sanctification of the *weekly Sabbath*. What the Jews said falsely of Christ, we may apply truly enough to many a Parent, and Master; *This Man is not of God, for he keepeth not the Sabbath Day*, and takes no Care that his Family with him do so. You have many helps to understand the Nature of the Duty, and of your Christian Deportment on *that Day*, in publick, private, and secret. You would do well, the Night before to make some Preparation for the Solemnity of that Day; and in the Morning, to possess your Souls with the Consideration of the Privilege you enjoy in such weekly Seasons of approaching to God, and paying Homage to him. Serious Godliness has never been found to flourish in any Soul, or in any

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ny House, as to any Person, or any Family, where the strict * Observation of the Lord's Day has been neglected. If you begin with God in secret, that will prepare you for Family-Worship; the private Worship of God in your Families will fit you for the publick; and your careful serious Attendance on that, will help you to return to the Worship of God in your Families, and Closets. You ought to methodize, and time these Duties so, as one may not interfere with the other. Sanctify the whole Day to God, improve every part of it; make it not shorter than the other Days of the Week, as many do, by rising later, and going to bed sooner. Bring as many of your Families to the publick Worship with you, as you can. When *Elkanah* went to sacrifice to the Lord, he and all his House went with him; 1 Sam. 1. 21. And if you recollect, and repeat to them afterwards, the Substance of what you, and they have heard preached, it may promote their Attention in hearing, assist their Memories

* See my Lord Chief Justice *HALES's* Contemplations, 8°. Vol. I. Directions to his Children, touching the keeping of the *LORD's DAY*.

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mories to retain what they heard, and quicken your own Affections. That by reading the Holy Scriptures, by Catechising, by repeating Sermons, &c. your Children and Servants may be instructed in the Knowledge of God, his Nature, and Works, and Will; in the Knowledge of themselves, the Immortality of their Souls, the Nature of Sin, our first Apostacy, and the sad Effects of it, our Redemption and Recovery by Jesus Christ, his Person, his Offices, his Ordinances and Sacraments, his Promises, Faith in him, the Covenant of Grace, the Properties and Privileges of Believers, the Rewards and Punishments of the next Life, &c.

In short, do but spend that Day, as knowing how small a part of every Week, *one Day* is to be solemnly imployed in preparing for an Eternal State: do but imploy that Day, under the Sense of the Value of Immortal Souls, your own and others: And think how near the Judgment-Day may be, when you must be accountable to God for all your Time, and especially such sacred Time. Do but spend that Day, as believing the Good or Evil Influence it will have upon all the other Days

Days of the Week; The Affairs of your Souls will thrive, or not thrive, as the Lord's Day is sanctified, or neglected: The Souls of your Children and Servants, if not minded then, are unlikely to be minded on the other Days of the Week: And oftentimes it is found, that even your civil, and secular Affairs do prosper, or not, according to your Care, or Remissness in sanctifying the Lord's Day.

Moreover, you ought not only to pray with your Families, and worship God with them; but to observe the Necessities of every one in particular, and heartily to pray for them in secret. You would have more Comfort in your Family-Relations, and God more Glory from them; did you more fervently beg of God the Grace which you and they do need. *Monica* the Mother of *Austin*, had gracious Answers to her Requests to God, both for her Husband and her Son. How can you strive with God in Prayer for your own Souls, and not remember to do the like for those whose Souls are committed to your Care? O that my Son may live to thee! O that my Daughters may not die for ever! O that my Servants may
not

not serve the Devil! O that there may not be a Son of Perdition, nor a Daughter of Belial, under my Roof! *Have mercy on me, O Lord, says the Woman of Canaan unto Christ: For my Daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil.* A certain Man, at another time, comes kneeling to him, saying, *Lord have mercy upon my Son. for he is a Lunatick, and sore vexed: For oftentimes he falls into the Fire, and oftentimes into the Water.* Such Prayers had success for the Cure of bodily Evils, and may rather be hoped to have so, for spiritual ones. If the Case of your Children resemble this, that any of them fall sometimes into the Fire of Lust, sometimes into the Water of Drunkenness, sometimes into this Sin, sometimes into that, being hurried, and led captive by the Devil; beg that God would dispossess Satan, and that he would have mercy on them, and bring them to themselves. You know not what effect your Prayers may have while you live; nor of what Advantage a Stock of Prayers, laid up, may be unto your Children, after your Death. The largest Portion, the fairest Inheritance, or Estate you can leave them, may be a much less Kindness.

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Your Interest in the Covenant, and hearty Prayers for their Salvation, is a Treasure, they cannot sufficiently value. Whereas a wicked Father lays up Iniquity for his Children, as you have the Expression, *Job 21. 19, 20.* He may store up Riches, and God treasures up Wrath: And upon Imitation of their Father's Sins, God fills up the Measure of their Judgment, *Luke 11. 48, 50.*

While you neglect not Family and secret Prayer in these respects, you must likewise remember to observe what *Answers*, God at any time gives to such Prayers; What serious Impressions are made on the Minds and Hearts of Children or Servants; how their Knowledge and Grace do increase and grow; what Convictions the Spirit hath wrought on any of them; who is reformed, &c. and how God hath prospered your secular Endeavours, how he favours your Diligence in your Calling; but especially how he rewards your Faithfulness to the *Souls* of Inferiours. If any of your Children be good, or hopeful, though one it may be, or more be not; bless God for such a Mercy. Let not your sorrowful Complaints as to one, silence your Gratitude for Di-
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vine Grace manifested in another. All your Children were born in Sin, and might have lived and died in Sin; but you can say, though I have a *Cain*, I have a righteous *Abel*, I have a *Shem* as well as a *Cham*, a *Jacob* as well as an *Esau*, a *Solomon* as well as an *Absalom* or *Amnon*. God hath answered my Prayers, and blessed my Endeavours as to one or more, though not as to all: I will wait, and pray in Hope as to them also. By thus taking notice what Answers of Prayer you have upon this Account, you will know the better how to frame your Petitions to God for them, and to order your Counsels, Instructions, and farther Indeavours for their good: You will know what you have to acknowledge, and be thankful for, and what you have to lament, and beg in *Family-Prayer*.

And in the Management of that, Care is to be taken to chuse the *fittest Time*. A good Man will endeavour to order his Spiritual Affairs with Discretion, as well as his Temporal ones. In Family-Worship you should endeavour to be *short, distinct, methodical, and serious*; and not make such Duties *overlong*, lest some of the Family be tempted

All and but in, I Shem as an Salom my rs as all: es to what this how for In. for you hful and that, fittest ur to scre. In your d se- over- mp- ted

ted to say, Behold, what a Weariness is it? Labour to be serious and affectionate, though ordinarily you be but short: you may be longer on the Lord's Day. Be *serious*, I say, and *affectionate*: For he that is the Mouth of others to God in Prayer, if his Heart be drowsie, they who join with him are not like to be affected. You ought discreetly to *chuse the Time* also: In the Morning you will find, if it be deferred till such or such a *Business* be first dispatch'd, or if it be not one of the *first* things done in the Morning; you will find something or other intervene, to hinder it altogether. And in such Families where it can conveniently be done, before Supper; for the Evening is the most desirable Time. Many never kneel down to pray in their Families at Night, till they are fitter to lie down upon their Beds.

In the ordering of these things, let *Husbands* and *Wives*, who would further the Salvation of each others Souls, jointly concur to promote Godliness in their Families. Their first Care should be to endeavour the Salvation of each others Souls. For this they have Scripture-Incouragement, 1 Cor.

7. 16.

7. 16. *For what knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* It is true, no serious Christian would deliberately chuse to be so nearly related to one, that is a stranger to Christ: And they who are so related, ought to beg God Forgiveness for their sinful Rashness. But if they find themselves mistaken in their Choice in that respect, they must use the greater Care to perswade them to be such, as they supposed them to have been: Remembering however, that if they cannot as yet love them, as *real Saints*, they must yet love them, as *Husbands and Wives*.

But how hopefully may Religion be carried on in the Family, where both are devoted to God, and married to Christ! How should (and may) they build up one another in their Holy Faith, watch over each other, study their Tempers and Dispositions, exhort one another daily with Meekness and Wisdom, and strengthen one another's Hands in the Discharge of their respective Duties to Inferiours; endeavouring the utmost Union in this Work, lest, through the want of it, their

Wife, their Authority be weakened, and their Endeavours be frustrate of any good Success. The Endeavours of both are required: And if Covenant-Mercy descend from Parents to Children, 'tis on this Condition, that during their *Minority*, they take care to bring them up in the Knowledge, Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. When they come to be adult, or grown up, there is another Condition on the part of the Children, that they consent to the Terms of the Covenant, and willingly come under the Band of it. But *both Parents* are concern'd to bring up their Children for God. *Men* should not cast all the Care of Children, and Servants on their *Wives*; and *Women* should consider, as Matter of Duty, their joint Interest in the religious Government of the Family. I wish it were not a very frequent Case, that they, who should rule, are the most unruly part; and the Cause, that the Family is ungodly, and ungoverned.

There is a great Latitude in the Duty of Parents to their Children, to take care of them in Infancy, to dedicate them to God betimes, and bring them under the visible Band of the Covenant by

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by *Baptism*; and to teach them the meaning of it, as soon as capable; to keep them in subjection while young; to encourage them in all that is virtuous, and praise-worthy, and good; and lovingly, and seasonably reprove them for what is evil; to dispose of them with Wisdom and Care, as to their Schools, Callings, and Marriage, according to your Rank and Station, in the best Manner you can. And therein to consider the Interest of their Souls, as well as their temporal Welfare, and prefer it. Beg of God to teach you the true *Medium* between the Errours of Education, on either *Extreme*; either *that* of humouring them in Vanity, and indulging them in Sin, or *that* of Frowardness, Harshness, and too much Severity. If your own Parents be living, give your Children an Example of the Honour and Obedience you expect from them, by your becoming Carriage towards their Grand Parents.

If you would recommend, and promote Religion among Children and Servants, there is one thing I would beg of you, that you take heed never to speak of God and Sacred things, without the utmost *Seriousness*, and *Reverence*. If
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you do not possess their Minds with an Awe and Reverence of God, and Christ, and the Holy Scriptures, and the Life to come, you will do them little good. You should begin betime to do this. Mothers especially may drop Instruction into their Children, as soon almost as their Milk: At least you may teach them to pray, as soon as they begin to prattle. *Timothy* received that Knowledge of the Faith, in his Childhood, from his Mother and Grand-mother, (though his Father was a Greek or a Pagan, *Acts* 16. 1.) which afterwards he publickly profess'd, and adhered unto.

And much of the good or bad Impression upon their Minds, from what you say, will depend upon the Manner of your speaking: Your words must discover your honourable Thoughts of God, and Holiness, and Holy Christians, and Ministers, &c. They will be apt to like what you commend. Endeavour therefore to speak of Sin, and of wicked Men, with loathing and dislike; that they may see *your Judgment*, and learn to form *their own*. The way to win them betimes to the Fear of God, and Hatred of that which is Evil,

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is frequently to represent, in your Discourse, how safe, how profitable, how honourable, and pleasant a Life that of *serious Godliness* is. Hereby you remove, or cure their Prejudices concerning practical Religion, as a melancholy, burdensome thing. And take heed what *Books* they read; and what *Company* they keep, lest their Minds be poisoned and corrupted by ill Principles, and their Hearts inticed and drawn to Sin; and so all your Instructions fail of Success. Without such Care 'tis in vain to put up Bills to Ministers, Week after Week, to pray for your dead Children, whose Souls you your selves do murder by your Negligence, or ill Example.

But your Counsels and Discourse, back'd by a Holy *Example* to inforce them, may do much good; and will if these go together: For if *Inferiours* see you to be unjust, deceitful, drunken, wanton, cruel, &c. all your serious Talk will do them harm, rather than good. Especially if you do not carry it well in your Relations to them; if Parents be very passionate, and hasty with their Children; if Masters be barbarous, and hard-hearted to their *Servants*,

wants, and remember not how it was with them when they were *Servants*: I mean not so much, how they fared, as how they desired, and wish'd to have been used, under their Apprenticeship.

And of all the serious things which may be proper to be recollected; there is hardly any thing of greater Moment, than to instil often into their Minds, the value and worth of *Time*. That they may be brought to hate *Idleness*, and not care to mispend one Hour: But as they grow more capable of improving it, may be still employed. You cannot insist too often upon the *Brevity*, and *Uncertainty* of our little *Time* on Earth; the *Swiftness* and *Irrecoverableness* of it, and the *Consequence* of redeeming it well or ill, in order to our future Account. The Devil is almost sure of those, who are brought up in *Idleness*, and put no value upon their *precious Time*. Urge this therefore to Inferiours, and help them to improve their *Time*, and to begin every Day with *secret Prayer alone*, and to employ the other part of it, in what is suitable to their Age, Capacity, Condition, and Relation.

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You would do well to put them upon *secret Prayer*; to advise your Children and Servants, and charge them to pray *alone* every Day, as well as be willing to join in Family-Prayer. You ought also to teach them, by Word and by Example, to beg a Blessing on their Food, at the usual Seasons of Refreshment, and seriously to return Thanks afterwards. We depend on God for our *Daily Bread*. And our Blessed Saviour did never eat himself, or feed others at his Table, but he blessed, and gave thanks, *Mark 8. 6, 7.* So the Apostle, *Acts 27. 25.* and by Prayer and Thanksgiving is every Creature sanctified, *1 Tim. 4. 3, 4, 5.*

It will be of great Moment in order to a religious, well-ordered Family, to be very careful *whom* you admit to dwell with you. The Case may be so stated, it is true, that you must dwell with such as scorn, and despise Family-Religion, and Worship; But take heed lest you sinfully chase such Relations, and such Inhabitants. It may be, *David* thought that *Michal*, whom he knew came of a bad Stock, might be prevailed with by him, to join in the Worship of God, and in time be brought over to what he desired; but she despised him

him in her Heart, and mocked at his Zeal, and proved a Snare and a Cross, and made him repent his Choice. Wo to him, who hath a *Philistin* in his Bosom, as *Samson* had. *Marriage* is the turning-point of Life: Your future Religion, and your Eternal Interest, are greatly concerned therein. We find the Wickedness, and Ruin of several of the Kings of *Israel*, laid at this Door; that they married into a wicked Family: *Such a One*, he had a Wife of the House of *Abah*, and was quickly drawn off from God, by one who had a wicked *Abah* to her Father, and a cursed *Jexabel* to her Mother; and she stirr'd him up to work Wickedness, 1 Kings 21. 25.

A due Care on this Account is to be had in the Choice of *Servants* also: Such are to be preferr'd, who by *Education*, and, as far as you can judge, by *Inclination* too, will be willing to serve God, and rejoice in the Helps they may have to do so, in a religious Family. And how orderly and beautiful is *Family-Worship*, where all in the House do heartily join in it? You complain, you cannot bring your *Servants* to do what you desire, as to Matters of Religion,

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when it may be you had nothing of Religion in your Eye, in the Choice of Servants. It may be for a small Sum less with an Apprentice, or for the same Wages to another Servant, you might have had one, whose Education, and Inclinations would have been more encouraging; and who would thank God to enjoy such Advantages, for the Knowledge and Service of God, as he might have in your House. Servants also in disposing themselves; and *Parents* in the disposing their Children, ought to consider this. A wicked Master will commonly chuse wicked Servants, and make them worse. *When a Ruler* (of an House, or Town, or Country) *bearkeneth to Lies*, (or is otherwise wicked) *all his Servants are wicked*, *Prov. 29. 12.* Such a one can't endure the constant Reproof, that is given him by the good Conversation even of a Servant: And therefore will desire no more Religion in a Servant, than not to be unfaithful to his Trust. I wish there be not some *Masters*, (even amongst those, who would be accounted *Religious*) who are shy of chusing Servants, that have the Character of being so; contrary to *David's* Practice,

Psal.

Pfal. 101. 4, 5, 7. It is true, some that have been well educated, have proved very ill afterwards; and Masters have found themselves mistaken, after all their Care in this Matter: But if they did their Duty, to make the best Choice, and use the best Endeavours they could, they may have Peace and Quiet in their own Minds. when they meet with a Disappointment; which otherwise they cannot.

They ought to look to it, whom they admit into their Families; unless they value their particular Calling above their General one: For who can tell the Mischief, that *one bad Servant* may do in a House? *One Sinner destroys much good*: as one *Joseph* may bring a Blessing upon a Family, and upon all that his Master hath in the House. You can hardly expect, that God should succeed you with a Blessing in what you undertake, when you care not with what Tools you work, or whom you employ: And in the Nature of the thing, there is little reason to hope, that they, who are *false* to God, and to their own Souls, will ordinarily be *faithful* to you. We read of those who were no good Men, viz. *Laban*, and

Potiphar, &c. who have thrived the better for taking good Servants into their Families ; but I no where read of a good Man, that was the better for a wicked Servant : We have sad Experience every Day to the contrary.

But the Welfare and the Comfort of religious Families, depends not wholly on the Duty of the Heads of it ; They who are *Children*, or *Servants*, are obliged thankfully to improve the Blessing of Religious *Parents*, and *Masters*, and faithfully to do their Duty in each Relation. Without a wonderful Change by the Grace of God, you will never be good *Parents* to your own *Children*, (if you live to have any) if you are not good in the Relation of *Children*. The same may be said for *Servants* : Nor are they like to be good *Husbands* or *Wives*, who were not good in their former Relation as *Children*, or *Servants*. Neither are such who are not good in their Family-Relations like to be so in any other : Either good *Neighbours* in a *Town*, or good *Members* in a *Church*, or *Magistrates* in the *State*. *Abraham*, a *Rebellious Child*, proved a *Traiterous Subject* : *Hophni* and *Phineas*, *disobedient Children*, proved scandalous,

dalous, and sacrilegious Priests; so in other Instances.

Let Children *honour* and obey their Parents in the Lord: See that there be inward Reverence, Respect, and Love: Despise not their Persons; slight not their Instructions, Rebukes, or lawful Commands, or Government. Take heed of speaking contemptuously of either of them. *He that curseth Father or Mother, let him die the Death, Levit. 20. 9. His Lamp shall be put out in Darknes, Prov. 20. 20.* You should prize their Counsels, delight in their Presence, rejoyce in their Company, sympathize with them in their Sorrows or Joys, and readily deny your selves for their Sakes. The Expressions of *outward Honour* from Children to Parents, by the Dissoluteness of the Age, are almost out of Fashion: Such as rising up, and standing bare before them, (which is required of the Younger, unto such as are their Fathers only by Age, *Lev. 19. 31.*) to bow before them, and desire their Blessing or Prayers, to speak alway with respect to them, and of them, &c. The Honour that consists in *Obedience*, may be expressed many ways; as by being content to obey their lawful Or-

ders, though in the meanest Services; to be content to have their own Wills crossed, that the Will of their Parents may be fulfilled; by not marrying without their Knowledge, and Consent; and by submitting to their just Reproofs, Rebukes, and Corrections; and obeying them especially in the things of God, and for the good of their Souls. There is an *Honour* due to *Parents*, which consists in *Thankfulness*, and *Recompence*; Readily serving them, and supplying their outward Wants, comforting them in their Sorrows, Sufferings, Sicknes, Old-Age; being solicitous for their Safety, and Welfare, concern'd for their Reputation and Good-Name, praying daily for them; and plentifully, freely, and honourably providing for them, according to your Ability, and their Need. As *Joseph* did when advanc'd in the Court of *Pharaoh*. This is not *Justice* only, but *Piety*. Let them learn to show *Piety* at home, and requite their Parents, 1 Tim. 5. 4. And our Lord reproves the Scribes and Pharisees, who by their corrupt Doctrines would dispense with Children from such an Obligation, *Mat.* 15. 5, 6. Such Children then who are a Grief to
their

their Parents, or purloin their Goods, or waste their Estates, or do not to their utmost minister to the Supply of their Wants, do so far fail of their Duty. The Children of *Religious Parents*, are especially bound to pay them Honour; and so to walk, as to reflect Honour on them; imitating their good Examples, thanking God for his special Mercies to their Parents, while they lived, doing what they can to honour them at their Death; pleading with God the Covenant-Relation of their Parents, to obtain a Blessing on themselves, as their Off-spring; and faithfully adhering to the Truth, Worship, and Ways of God, as their Holy Parents did before them.

This Honour is due to Parents whether they be Rich or Poor, Wise or Weak, whether in an honourable Station in the World, or in meaner Circumstances, whether in vigorous Health, or bowed down under Sickness, and the Infirmities of Old-Age: Remember still they are your Parents.

It is a Mercy you ought to be very thankful for, to have Religious Parents, and live in a Religious Family. It is a Prize in your Hands, you must give an Account of: And a sad Account it will be,

be, if you remain ignorant of God, and Rebels against Christ, under those Advantages to know, and obey him, which others want. How unthankful are you, if you value it not as a Privilege? What work for the Worm of Conscience do you provide, if you improve it not! You might have been born of such Parents, as would have wholly neglected the Salvation of your Souls; or you might have been cast into some Atheistical Families, where God is not worshipped from Week to Week. Few are sensible enough of the Obligation they are under to God, by being related as *Husband*, or *Wife*, as a *Child* or a *Servant*, to such as truly fear God.

I would here call such Children to *Repentance*, who have neglected, and failed in their Duty to Parents. Let grown Persons reflect on their Childhood, and Youth, when they lived with their Parents, and since. Have you not been Stubborn and Rebellious, Irreverent, and disrespectful in your Carriage to one, or both of them? Have you not secretly despised them in your Hearts? or openly published their Infirmities? Have you not of-

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ten disobeyed their lawful Commands? or slighted their wholesome Admonitions? Have you not denyed, or been backward to Assist and Comfort them? Have you not secretly coveted their Estates, before their Death? or desired that it might be quickly? Did you honour them, inwardly with a good Conscience, from the Love of God, and the sense of his Authority? Let us call our selves to an account, and renew our Repentance before God, for such Sins, that his Pardoning Grace may prevent his Threatned Wrath. And let us take heed to live hereafter as the Children of such, of whom God was not ashamed to be called their God.

Remember the Advantages of your being thus related to Holy Parents: for Temporal Blessings, *Ismael, Salomon, Reboboam*, and others are Instances of the kindness of God to Children upon the account of their Fathers. But you stand fairest for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings, you are Children of the Covenant, and Members of the Visible Church of Christ, the Blessing of *Abraham, I will be thy God*, which reached unto his Seed, being now come upon us
Gentiles,

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Gentiles, Gal. 3. 14. You have many *Helps* to serious Godliness, which others have not: You have many *Hindrances* removed, which make it more difficult for others, who descend from wicked Parents, and live in Ignorant, Irreligious Families. You have more Knowledge of God and Christ, of Sin and Duty. And usually the Spirit of Grace begins more early with such Children, and follows them with more Calls, Offers, Invitations, Strivings, Convictions; and leaves them not till they are Profligate, Desperate, and Resolved in Wickedness: whereof *Ishmael* a Scoffer, *Esau* a Profane Person, and the *Jewish Nation*, (who filled up the measure of their Iniquity, by Rejecting and Murdering the Lord of Glory) are eminent Examples.

Remember your Relation, and think what God and all the World expects from you. There is a great Privilege belonging by Gospel-grant to the Children of Holy, Covenanted Parents, if they do not forfeit it, by forsaking, and practically disavowing *their Fathers God*. If you will own him, he will be *Your God*, as well as *Theirs*. He hath an early preventive Interest in you,

you, upon which you may lay your Claim to him as *Your God*, if you will devote your selves to him, and stand to his Covenant. To be ungodly Children of Holy Parents is the greatest Unworthiness that can be. *Be astonished O ye Heavens at this!* Jer. 2. 12. That any Persons, or People should cast off their God. *Thine own Friend, and thy Father's Friend forsake not*, saith Solomon, much less *thy Father's God*. How reproachful will be your Wickedness, if you are not better than others! If you who are the Children of the Covenant, become the Children of the Devil, by doing his Works! Shall there be a scoffing *Ismael* come out of *Abraham's House*, or a profane *Esau* from *Isaac's Family*, a rebellious *Absalom*, or a filthy *Amnon* be found in the Family of the Holy *David*? God forbid that any of you should find or force the way to *Hell*, out of such Houses, where God is daily worshiped! Certainly a Wicked Child of Religious Parents is one of the most miserable Spectacles in the World. He is within the Visible Family of God, devoted to him, made acquainted with his Duty, and can have no excuse for his Sin. What
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Aggravations hath such a one's Guilt! They must have stifled more Convictions, and resisted more Grace, than others. And how sure and severe will be their Condemnation! when all the Prayers, and Pains of Holy Parents shall witness against them! and God account such Children, as the Children of the *Ethiopian*, or *Arabian*.

And have you no Concern for, or Love to your Parents? Consider how wicked Children embitter all the Comforts of their good Parents. *A Father of a Fool*, saith the Wise Man, *hath no joy*, Prov. 17. 21. While Parents are in bitterness for a dissolute Child, they cannot have that Joy and Comfort in one another, which otherwise they might: nor in the other Children, who are more hopeful: The whole Family is Afflicted, and Disturbed. The Grace of God, by which they overcome their own Corruptions, gives them not so much Comfort as otherwise, when they see the Sin they have mortified and forsaken, break out, and reign in any of their Children. Nor can they rejoyce in God, and Jesus Christ, as otherwise, when according to the Word of God, they hope and believe

believe he is their Friend and Father, and by the same Word know he is an Enemy to this or the other Son, or Daughter, and that the Wrath of God abideth on them: And that if they get to Heaven themselves, such of their Children are not like to follow them there.

Lastly, Let *Children* and *Servants* take heed of their Carriage towards *One another*. Let them endeavour Concord, and Union, and Love; and avoid Contention, and Falling out, and the using of provoking, exasperating Language to one another. Let them help one another, as they can, in Health and Sickness, and take each others Concernment as their own. Let them watch over one another, as to the Sins, and Temptations they are most in danger of. Let them beware of vain unprofitable Discourse, and Idleness; and most carefully put away all filthy corrupt Communication, whereby they may poison the Souls of one another. Let them tenderly bear with one anothers Failings, and prudently conceal one anothers Faults, (where the Concealment of them tends not to

to the Wrong of the Parent or Master, or of any other; and where the opening of them will but stir up Strife.) This would also help to promote *Family Religion*. I desire and pray that these plain hasty Thoughts, may be serviceable to that purpose. With that Hope, I commend them to the Divine Blessing, and you to his Grace and Providence: Let us unite in the Resolution, that *whatever others do, we with our House, will serve the Lord, and worship the God of our Fathers*; and in that way and manner as to *Our Families*, wherein we have, besides their Example, so much other Encouragement from the Holy Scriptures, and Reason, and the Practice of the best Men. I am with Respect, and Sincerity,

S I R,

Yours,

J. S.

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APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

Rules of good Advice

FOR OUR

Christian & Civil Carriage,

Mostly from

Bishop *HAL L's* Epistles.

LET us begin with Him, who is the *First* and the *Last*: Inform your self aright concerning God, without whom, in vain do we know all things. Be acquainted with your Redeemer, who paid the price of your Redemption on Earth, and now intercedes

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tercedes in Heaven; without whom we have nothing to do with God, or he with us. Adore him in your Thoughts, Love him with all your Heart, and Trust him with your Souls. Renew your sight of him every day, and his of you. Call your selves to often Reckonings; cast up your Debts, Payments, Graces, Wants, Expences, Employments. Think not your set Devotions troublesome; yield not to such a Thought; take not easy Denials of your self, and beware of Self-battery. Think all God's outward Favours and Provisions the best for you; your own Ability and Actions the meanest. Suffer not your Mind to be a Drudge or Wanton; Exercise it ever, but overcharge it not. Every Day take a View of your last, as what may prove so. In all your Business look through the World to God; whatsoever is your Level, let him be your Scope. Offer not your self
either

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either to Honour or Labour, let both seek you. So frame your self to the *Time* and *Company*, that you may neither serve it, nor sullenly neglect it; and yield so far as that you may not betray your Conscience, or countenance Evil. Let your Words be few and digested: It is a shame for the Tongue to cry the Heart Mercy, much more to cast it self on the uncertain pardon of other men's Ears. There are but two things, which a Christian is charged to buy, and not to sell, *Time* and *Truth*, both so precious that we must purchase them at any rate. So use your *Friends*, as those which should be Perpetual, may be Changeable. While you are within your self, there is no danger; but Thoughts once uttered must stand to Hazard. Do not hear from your self, what you would be loth to hear from others. Give the Eye and Ear full scope in what is good, for they let Knowledge

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ledg into the Mind, but restrain the *Tongue*; few Men have repented them of silence. In all serious Matters, take Counsel of Days, and Nights, and Friends; and let Leisure ripen your Purposes; never hope to gain ought by suddenness. The first Thoughts may be confident, the second are wiser. Serve Truth and Honesty ever, though without apparent Wages; the Recompence is sure, if slow. As in Apparel, so in Actions; consider not so much what is good, as what becomes you. Excuse not your own Evil, aggravate not that of others: and if you love *Peace*, avoid Censures, Comparisons, and Contradictions, and Evil Speaking. Out of good Men choose Acquaintance, of Acquaintance, Friends, of Friends, Familiars; after Trial, admit them; and after Admittance, change them not. Do not alway your Best: it is neither wise nor safe for a Man ever to stand on
the

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the top of his Strength. Be ever below your self, if you would be above the Expectation of others. Expend according to your Purse, not after your Mind, or the Example of Neighbours. Rather smother your Grievs and Wants as you may, than be either Querulous, or Importunate: Frequent Suits, or Complaints are wearisom to a Friend. Let not your Face belie your Heart, nor alway tell tales out of it. In all your Reckonings for the World, cast up some Crosses that appear not; either they will come, or may. Let your Suspicions be Charitable; your Trust fearful; your Censures sure. Give way to the Anger of Great Men, against whom you have no Fence: patiently bear the Inconveniencies you cannot mend; and make the best of what must be. If the World smile upon you, with double care look to your Soul, for there is more danger in Good than Evil.

F I N I S.

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